Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī

Edited by: Tawheed Institute Australia

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsá	Moses
David	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Aaron	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibraḥīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Joseph	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Mary	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Foreword

This second edition volume 7 of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* comprises of the *tafsīr* of eighty verses of Sūrah Āl-Imrān which is a continuation from Eng. volume 6, and the first ten verses of Sūrah Āl-Nisāʾ.

Some of the important subjects discussed in this volume are as follows: the teaching of the Qur'an and its role in the reconciliation of knowledge and action; the trial or test and its real meaning; the remission of sins and forgiveness in the Qur'an; the problem of *tawakkul* (resignation to the Divine Will); the verses dealing with the Battle of Uḥud and a list of the names of the 70 martyrs of Uḥud is also mentioned; a philosophical discussion based on a comparative study of the Qur'an and the Old Testament regarding the rights of women and the Qur'anic view of social relations in Islam—in fifteen sections. This is the most important discussion of this volume and may be considered to be one of the profound and most original of the discourses of *al-Mīzān*. This discourse brings to light some very sensitive and subtle points about Islamic sociology in the light of the relevant verses of the Sūrah Āl-Nisāʾ (The Women) pertaining to the age of human beings, the emergence of the first man, the process of creation and evolution and other related matters. At the end, there is a discussion about marriage from a scientific point of view, divided into three sections. The third section is devoted to the issue of polygamy in Islam with reference to the question of the number of the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The philosophical implications of these issues are discussed thoroughly.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd are thankful to those who took the painstaking task of editing the first Eng. volume (previously published by WOFIS) and to bring this new edition to completion. We hope the readers will welcome this edition with much enthusiasm.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd
October, 2021

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About the Translator

The late ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī was one of the most sincere preachers of Islam and an active scholar, both when he was in Tanzania in the Bilāl Muslim Mission (an Islamic organization active in Tanzania), and also when he returned to his own country of India. In the way of spreading Islam he has rendered enormous services and has been most active.

ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī had written scores of books and booklets in English, Urdu and Swahili, many of which have been published; and some other titles which have been published by WOFIS. Some of his books have been translated and published by in French, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Hausa and other languages.

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About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imām, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers,

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1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others.

particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Moseswī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Moses, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* [Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative

study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam.* The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qurʾan with the help of the Qurʾan itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

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Chapter 3

Sūrah Al-ʿImrān

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Verses 121-129

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Now the discourse turns back to what the chapter had begun with: Warning the believers of the serious situation they were in; reminding them of God's favors bestowed on them, that is, true belief, divine help and the fact that God is sufficient for them; teaching them what would lead them to their noble goal; and guiding them to what would make them happy in this life and the hereafter.

It describes the battle of Uḥud. There are some verses referring to the battle of Badr, but they are like supplement inserted here for cross-reference, and as we shall explain later, they are not meant as main topic here.

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وَإِذۡ غَدَوۡتَ مِنۡ أَهۡلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ مَقَٰعِدَ لِلۡقِتَالِۗ وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ١٢١

(3:121) ***And when you did go forth early in the morning from your family to lodge the believers in encampments for war; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing***

"When" in Arabic is adverb of time related to a deleted verb example "Remember" or similar verbs; *ghadawta* translated here as "you did go forth early in the morning" is derived from *al-ghadw* (to come out early in the morning); *at-tabwʾah* means to prepare a place for someone, or to put him in a place; *maāʿid* is plural [seat; translated here as encampment). *Ahl* of a man, according to al-Rāghib, are those who are joined to him in genealogy or house or other such things like religion, town or handicraft. Thus *ahl* of a man refers to his wife and all those who are in his house, like wife, child, servant, etc.; also it denotes all who are related to him like his

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family or clan; residents of a town or followers of a religion are called *ahl* of that town or religion; artisans and masters of a handicraft are called *ahl* of that art or handicraft. The word *ahl* is used for masculine and feminine both; also for singular and plural alike. Its use is exclusively reserved for human beings; *ahl* of a thing are the people related to it exclusively.

Ahl of the Messenger of God are therefore the people exclusively related to him. Here it refers to a group—not to a single person. It may be understood from the expression, "you did go forth early in the morning from your family", because it may be said, "You went forth from your relatives and your group"; but it cannot be said, "You went forth from your wife" or "from your mother." An exegete has mistakenly thought that *ahl* refers to singular only, and therefore he had to say that there was some word deleted (but understood) from the verse; according to him the verse means, "did go forth … from the house of your family." But as you have seen nothing in this verse demands such an interpretation.

The preceding and following verses are addressed to the believers as a group. But the verses under discussion turn from plural to singular; they are addressed not to the believers but to the Messenger of God alone. Apparently this diversion has some connection with the shade of displeasure found in the verses dealing with this battle; there is an undercurrent of reproach, censure and stricture running throughout for what the Muslims had done [in the battle of Uḥud] where they had shown cowardice and lack of will-power and courage. Therefore, whenever a topic comes which exclusively concerns the Prophet, God ignores and disregards the believers and speaks to the Prophet alone. Thus God says: *And when you did go forth early in the morning from your family; When you said to the believers: "Does it not suffice you that your Lord should assist you …"; You have no concern in the affair; Say: "Surely the affair is wholly (in the hands) of Allah"* [3:154]; *Thus it is due to the mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you* [3:159]; *And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead* [3:169].

In all the above verses the plural verbs and pronouns have been changed to singular. It seems as though the speaker is not in a mood to continue the preceding style [of speaking to the whole community] because He is very much annoyed and displeased with them.

It is unlike some other verses coming in between where effectiveness and sharpness of admonition depended on direct talk with the believers

and therefore the plural was used. For example: *And Muḥammad is no more than a messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heals?* [3:144]; *When you ran off precipitately and did not turn towards any one, and the Messenger was calling you from your rear* [3:153].

Also it is unlike another intervening verse, that is: *Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications* [3:164]. Here God describes His favor on the believers of sending the Prophet to them; and it could be effective and more impressive only if it was supposed as if the Prophet himself were not present there. Ponder on all these verses and you will appreciate the relevance of what we have written.

The verse under discussion means as follows: O Prophet, remember when you did go forth early in the morning from your family in order that you should place the believers in their sectors for war; and God is Hearing (He had heard what was said there) and Knowing (He had known what was hidden in their hearts). The expression, "you did go forth early in the morning from your family", indicates that the battle-ground was nearer to the Prophet's house. It clearly shows that the two verses refer to the battle of Uḥud, and in this way they are related to other verses which would follow later and which describe the battle of Uḥud. All these verses fit the events which had taken place in Uḥud.

This shows the weakness of the claim that these two verses were revealed about the battle of Badr, or, as someone else said, about the battle of the Confederates. And it is obvious [from the context].

…and Allah is Hearing, Knowing: He is Hearing, He had heard what was spoken there; and Knowing, He knew what was hidden in their hearts. It indicates that some Muslims had spoken there some [undesirable] things, and there were other things which they had not disclosed to others.

Apparently the next clause, "When two parties from among you had determined that they should show cowardice", is related to these two attributes, [that is, God heard and knew the conspiracy and intention of the two parties when they had determined to show cowardice.]

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتَانِ مِنكُمْ أَنْ تَفْشَلَا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

(3:122) ***When two parties from among you had determined that***

they should show cowardice, and Allah was the guardian of them both, and in Allah should the believers trust.

al-Hamm (what you determine in your heart; intention); *al-fashl* (weakness with cowardice).

…and Allah was the guardian of them both: This is a circumstantial clause, related to the verb, "had determined." It is meant as an admonition and reproof, as is the concluding sentence, "and in God should the believers trust." The connotation is as follows: The two parties had determined to show cowardice although God was their guardian—and a believer should not show weakness and cowardice when he believes that God is his guardian and when he is supposed to entrust all his affairs to God, and whoever trusts in God then He is sufficient for him.

This explanation shows the weakness of an interpretation offered by an exegete who says: "This intention of the two parties was merely a thought, a notion, not a determination, because God has praised them and said that He was their guardian. Had it been a firm determination and intention, they should have been blamed rather than praised."

Comment: I do not understand what he means when he says that it was merely a thought, or a notion. Is this the meaning of cowardice? If so, then everyone present there knew the meaning of cowardice, and it makes no sense to mention it in this context; nor is it called "determination" in Arabic language. Or, does he mean knowledge of cowardice coupled with some intention; a notion with determination to act upon it? [If so, then it was not merely a thought or a notion.] Also, the verse shows that the condition of the two parties was obvious to the others; had it been merely a passing thought without showing any effect on their behavior, others would not have known that they had determined to show weakness and cowardice. Moreover, the reminder that God was their guardian and that the believers must put their trust in God, dove-tails with firm determination, not with a passing thought. And in any case, we have explained that in the present context, the clause, "and God was the guardian of them both", is not intended as a praise, it is a reproof, an admonition.

Perhaps this misunderstanding has sprung up from a tradition attributed to Jābir b. ʿAbdillāh al-Anṣārī, in which he says: "(This verse) was revealed about us; and I would not prefer if it were not revealed, because God has said, and God was the guardian of them both." The said exegete probably thought that Jabir had taken the clause as a praise.

Even if the said tradition be accepted as correct, Jābir's theme is different from what that exegete has thought. Jābir means that God then accepted their belief and confirmed that they were believers, because He counted Himself as their guardian, and God is the guardian of those who believe, and as for the unbelievers their guardians are the rebels. Jābir does not mean that this clause implies any praise, when it has been put in this context of clear reprimand and censure.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ ۖ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

(3:123) ***And Allah did certainly assist you at Badr when you were weak; fear Allah then, that you may give thanks.***

The context obviously shows that this verse has been revealed here as a supporting evidence to emphasize the stricture, to complete the reproof. If so, then this too would be a circumstantial clause, like the preceding one, "and God was the guardian of them both." Its connotation then would be as follows: You should not have determined to show cowardice while God had certainly assisted you at Badr when you were weak. On the other hand, it might be an independent sentence revealed here to remind them of the wonderful assistance provided to them at Badr, when God had sent down the angels to help them when they were weak.

God mentions here the help sent by Him to them at Badr, and compares their present condition with that; and it is known that whoever becomes strong, does so only with God's help and His assistance, because man, per se, has nothing except neediness and weakness. That is why God says: "when you were weak."

It many be understood from the above that the statement, "when you were weak", does not disagree with such other divine words as, *and to Allah belongs the might and to His Messenger and to the believers* [63:8], because the believers' might springs from the might of God, as He says: *Then surely all might is for Allah* [4:139]; and it proceeds from the divine help given to the believers, as God says: *And certainly We sent before you messengers to their people, so they came to them with clear arguments, then We gave the punishment to those who were guilty; and helping the believers is ever incumbent upon Us* [30:47]. In this situation if we look at the condition of the believers, per se, they have got nothing except weakness.

Apart from that, if we look at the believers' condition in Badr, we shall have to admit that they were certainly weaker in comparison to the

strength, might and enthusiasm the polytheists had. And there is no difficulty in ascribing a relative weakness to otherwise mighty ones. God has ascribed it to a people whom He has praised very extensively, when He says: *then soon God will bring a people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, humble* (adhillah, = lit: weak) *before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers* [5:54].

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلَاثَةِ آلَافٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُنْزَلِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلَىٰ ۚ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُمْ مِنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هَٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

(3:124-125) ***When you said to the believers. "Does it not suffice you that your Lord should assist you with three thousand of the angels sent down? Yea! if you remain patient and are on your guard (against evil), and they come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord will assist you with five thousand of the havoc-making angels."***

al-Imdād is derived from *al-madd* and signifies giving *al-madad* (help) continuously.

Balā (Yea) is used for affirmation; *al-fawr* and *al-fawrān* means to boil; they say, *fār al-qidr* (the cooking-pot boiled up); then the word was used to denote hurry and haste. Thus the phrase, *min fawrihim hādha* (translated here as, *in a headlong manner*) means, 'at once'; 'immediately'.

Obviously, the promise refers to the battle of Badr. It is a conditional promise, and the conditions are given in these clauses, "if you remain patient and are on your guard and they come upon you in a headlong manner."

An exegete has written that it is a promise to send down the angels if they came upon the believers (not "immediately", that is not on the day of Badr, but) after the immediate time, that is after the battle of Badr. Another one has written that it is a promise to send down the angels in all the battles after the Badr, like Uḥud, Ḥunayn and the Confederates. But the wording of the verse does not agree with it.

As for Uḥud, there is obviously nothing in the verses that might allude to coming of the angels on that day. So far as the battles of the Confederates and Ḥunayn are concerned, the Qur'an, of course, says [in

other places] that the angels were sent on those days: It says about the battle of the Confederates: … *when there came down upon you hosts, so We sent against them a strong wind and hosts that you saw not …* [33:9]. And it says about the day of Ḥunayn: … *and on the day of Ḥunayn … and sent down hosts which you did not see …* [9:25–26]. Nevertheless, the wording of the verse under discussion, "Yea! if you remain patient and are on your guard (against evil) and they come upon you in a headlong manner", does not show any general promise.

There is no conflict between this verse which speaks of three thousand angels being sent down at Badr, and the statement of the chapter of al-Anfāl, which says: … *so He answered you: "I will assist you with a thousand of angels following (after others)"* [8:9]. The word, "following", indicates that they would follow others—the "others" referring to the remaining two thousand who would complete the number promised in this verse.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١٢٦﴾

(3:126) ***And Allah did not make it but as good news for you, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby, and help is only from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise.***

The pronoun "it" refers to the help. *ʿInd* (near) is an adverb of place, indicating presence. Initially it was used for nearness and presence in place; obviously it was reserved for physical things. Then its circle widened and it was used for nearness in time. Finally it was used for general, and even spiritual, nearness. The Qur'an has used it in various connotations.

The theme of the statement, "and help is only from God, the Mighty, the Wise", when seen in conjunction with the preceding words, "And God did not make it but as good news for you, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby", implies that the phrase, *min ʿind allāh* (lit: from near God) refers to that "station" of Lordship which every affair and every order emanates from; and without which nothing can suffice, nor can any cause be independent of it. The meaning therefore is as follows: The helper angels have in fact no concern with the promised help; they are merely apparent causes—they bring to you good news and satisfaction of heart. The reality of help is from God, nothing can suffice from Him; He is God, the final

destination of everything; the Mighty Who cannot be subdued, the Wise Who is not unaware of anything.

لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوا خَائِبِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ لَيْسَ
لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلِلَّهِ
مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

(3:127-129) ***That He may cut off a portion from among those who disbelieve, or abase them so that they should return disappointed of attaining what they desired. You have no concern in the affair whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them, for surely they are unjust. And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.***

"That" is related to the verb, "And God did certainly assist you at Badr." [He assisted you so that He may cut off].

"Cutting off a portion" metaphorically means decreasing their number and debilitating them with slaying and imprisoning, as had happened at Badr where seventy idol worshippers were killed and seventy arrested. *al-Kabt* means to abase, to exasperate.

The clause, "You have no concern in the affair", is a parenthetic one. It emphasizes the proposition that the authority of cutting off a portion from, or abasing them, is entirely in the hand of God; the Prophet has no concern in this matter—that they should praise and acclaim him if they vanquished and defeated their enemy, and should blame him and remonstrate with him if things went against them; they should not be infirm and grieving, as they had done on the day of Uḥud—as God has narrated.

The next clause, "whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them", is in conjunction with the preceding, "That He may cut off …", and the sentence is continuing. The next verse, "And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's", is explicative clause describing why the matter of repentance and forgiveness rests exclusively in the hand of God. The meaning is as follows: The sound arrangement [at Badr] were made by God in order that He might cut off a portion of the polytheists through slaughter and imprisonment, or abase them and disappoint them

of attaining what they had desired, or that He might turn to them mercifully or chastise them. As for the cutting off a portion of them and abasing them, it is because all affairs are in His hands, you have no concern in it, (so they should neither praise nor blame you in this affair); and as for repentance and forgiveness, it is because God is the Owner of everything, He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases. Even then, His forgiveness and mercy surpasses His chastisement and anger, because He is Forgiving, Merciful.

We have treated the sentence, "And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's", as explaining the reason for the preceding two clauses (whether He turns to them [mercifully] or chastises them), because the concluding clauses specifically explain this matter: "He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases."

The exegetes have described other ways to show the connection of the words, "That He may cut off a portion …", and the significance of conjunction in the words, "whether He turns to them or chastises them"; also, they have given other justifications for the words, "You have no concern in the affair", and for the sentence, "And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's." We have ignored them as there was no use of commenting upon them, because they go against the apparent meanings and the context of the verses. Anyone wanting to see them should consult other bigger commentaries.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣādiq said: "The cause of the battle of Uḥud was as follows: When the Quraysh returned from Badr to Mecca—and it had befallen to them from slaughter and imprisonment what had befallen, because seventy of them were killed and seventy imprisoned—Abū Sufyān said: 'O people of Quraysh! Do not let your women weep on your dead, because if tear is shed, it would remove the grief and (lessen) the hatred of Muḥammad.' And when they fought the Messenger of God on the day of Uḥud, they allowed their women to weep and lament; and they proceeded from Mecca with three thousand horses and two thousand foot [soldiers] and brought their women with them.

"When the news reached the Messenger of God, he gathered his companions and exhorted them to fight. ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl said: 'O Messenger of God! Do not go out of Medina, so that

we fight in its alleys; thus even a weak man, a woman, a slave-boy and a slave-girl would fight on the entrances of the lanes and on the roofs; because never did any people (who attacked us) defeat us when we were within our fortresses and homes; and never did we go out to meet an enemy of ours but they vanquished us.'

"Then Saʿd b. Muʿādh and others from the tribe of Aws stood up and said: 'O Messenger of God! Never did anyone from the Arabs have any ambition against us while we were polytheist worshipping idols; how can they then be emboldened against us and you are among us? No: (we shall not rest) until we go out to them and fight them; whoever then among us will be killed shall be a martyr, and whoever among us is saved will have fought in the way of God.'

"So, the Messenger of God accepted his advice and came out with a group of his companions, fixing their places at the battle-ground; as God says: *And when you did go forth early in the morning from your family* but ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl and a group of Khazraj who followed his opinion, held back from [the Prophet].

"The Quraysh appeared at Uḥud. The Messenger of God had positioned his companions—they were seven hundred men—and lodged ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr with fifty archers at the mouth of the mountain-pass; [the Prophet] was worried that the [enemy] might ambush from that side. Therefore, he said to ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr and his companions: 'If you see that we have defeated them until we have pushed them inside Mecca, you should not leave this place; and if you see that they have overcome us until they have pushed us into Medina, you should not leave [here], but stick to your posts.

"Abū Sufyān hid khālid b. Walīd with two hundred horses with this [very idea of] ambush, and said to him: 'When you see that we [two forces] have mixed together, you come over to them from this mountain-pass, so that you will be [attacking them from] behind them.'

"The Messenger of God mobilized his companions; and gave the standard to the Commander of the faithful (ʿAlī). The Helpers attacked the polytheists of the Quraysh, and [the enemy] suffered an ignominious defeat. The companions of the Messenger of God

laid hold of the masses of the [Quraysh]. Khālid b. Walīd came with his two hundred horse over ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr; but they confronted them with arrows, and Khālid retreated. The group of ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr saw the companions of the Messenger of God looting the masses of the enemy; they said to ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr: 'Our companions are taking away (all) the booty; should we remain without any booty?' ʿAbdullāh told them: 'Fear God, because the Messenger of God had indeed directed us not to leave our post.' But they did not listen to him, and began slinking away one by one, until they left their station unattended, and ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr was left there with (only) twelve men.

"The standard of the Quraysh was in the hand of Ṭalḥah b. Abī Ṭalḥah al-ʿAbdī (from Banū ʿAbd al-Dār); ʿAlī killed him; then Abū Saʿīd b. Abī Ṭalḥah took the standard and ʿAlī killed him. The standard fell down. Then Musāfiʿ b. Abī Ṭalḥah took it but ʿAlī killed him too—until he killed nine people from Banū ʿAbd al-Dār. Finally their standard was taken up by a black-slave of theirs, Ṣawāb by name. ʿAlī reached him and cut off his right hand; he took the standard in his left hand; ʿAlī struck at it and cut it off too, but he embraced it to his chest with his two amputated hands. Then he turned towards Abū Sufyān and said: 'Have I absolved Banū ʿAbd al-Dār from blame?' Then ʿAlī struck at his head and killed him. The standard fell down; then Ghamrah bint ʿAlqamah al-Kināniyyah took and raised it.

"Khālid b. Walīd came down to ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr—and his companions had fled leaving him with a few persons. [Khālid] killed [all of] them at the mouth of the pass, and then attacked the Muslims from behind. Quraysh were fleeing away when they saw their standard raised again, and they gathered around it, and the companions of the Messenger of God suffered utter defeat. They started climbing the mountains helter-skelter.

"When the Messenger of God saw the rout, he removed the helmet from his head and called (them, saying): 'Come to me; I am the Messenger of God; come to me; where are you running away from God and His Apostle?' Hind bint ʿUtbah was in the middle of the (Quraysh's) army; whenever any Qurayshite fled, she offered him a kohl-stick and a kohl-container, telling him: 'You are but a woman, better use this kohl.'

"Ḥamzah b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was attacking the enemy. When they saw him, they fled; none stood against him. Hind had promised Waḥshī that if he killed Muḥammad or ʿAlī or Ḥamzah, she would give him so-and-so much. (Waḥshī was an Ethiopian slave of Jubayr b. Muṭʿim.) Waḥshī said: 'As for Muḥammad, I was unable (to harm) him; and as for ʿAlī, I found him on his guard, always looking (all around him), so there was no hope of getting at him; therefore, I decided to ambush Ḥamzah. I saw him knocking the people down, destroying them. Then he passed by me, stepped on an undercut bank of a stream and fell down; I took my spear, shook it (taking aim) and threw it to him; it pierced his waist and came out between his legs (pubic region); then I went to him, ripped his stomach open, took out his liver and brought it to Hind; I said to her, "This is Ḥamzah's liver." She put it into her mouth trying to chew it. But God made it in her mouth like a knee-cap, so she took it out and threw it.' The Messenger of God said: 'God sent an angel who took it and returned it to its place.') Waḥshī said: 'Then I came(back) to him, and I cut his genitals, removed his ears and amputated his hands and legs.'

"There remained no one with the Messenger of God except Abū Dujānah Simāk b. Kharashah and ʿAlī. Whenever any group attacked the Messenger of God, ʿAlī faced them and repulsed them; (it continued) until his sword was broken; then the Messenger of God gave him his sword, *Dhu al-Fiqār*. The Messenger of God retired to a side of Uḥud and stood there; and ʿAlī continued fighting them so (valiantly) that he had got seventy wounds on his head, face, body, belly and legs—as narrated by ʿAlī b. Abraham in his *al-Tafsīr*. Thereupon, Gabriel said: 'Verily, this is indeed the support, O Muḥammad!' Muḥammad replied; 'Surely he is from me and I am from him.' Gabriel said: 'And I am from you two.' "

(2) Abū ʿAbdillāh said: "The Messenger of God looked at Gabriel (sitting) on a golden chair between the heaven and the earth, and he was saying: 'There is no sword except *Dhu al-Fiqār*, and there is no hero except ʿAlī.' " (*Majmaʿ al-bayān*)

(3) al-Qummī narrates: "There (also) remained with the Messenger of God Nasībah bint Kaʿb al-Māziniyyah—and she used to go with the Messenger of God in his battles to treat the wounded—and her

son was with her. He wanted to retreat and go back (to Medina); but she attacked him and said: 'O my son, where are you fleeing from God and His Messenger?' Thus she made him come back. Then a man attacked and killed him,. Thereupon, she took her son's sword and attacked that man, and striking at his thigh she killed him. The Messenger of God said (to her): 'May God bless you, O Nasībah.' She was protecting the Messenger of God with her chest until she was extensively wounded.

"Ibn Qamī'ah attacked the Messenger of God; and he had said: 'Show me Muḥammad. May I be damned if he gets away (from me).'

Then he hit [the Messenger of God] on his shoulder and cried: 'I have killed Muḥammad, by al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā.' " (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comments: There are some other traditions about the events of Uḥud, some of them disagree with this one in some details. For example:

(a) This tradition gives the number of the polytheists as five thousand, while most of the traditions say three thousand.

(b) It says that it was ʿAlī who killed all the nine standard-bearers of the enemy. Other traditions support it; and Ibn al-Athīr has narrated it in his history, al-nil, from Abū Rāfiʿ. But another group of narrations attributes slaying of some of them to some others. But meditation on these events supports what the present tradition says.

(c) It says that it was Hind who made a covenant with Waḥshī regarding the murder of Ḥamzah. Some Sunnī narrations say that it was not Hind but Waḥshī's master, Jubayr b. Muṭʿim, who had entrusted this task to Waḥshī, promising to emancipate him on his slaying Ḥamzah. But the fact that Waḥshī had taken Ḥamzah's liver, not to Jubayr, but to Hind, supports the present tradition.

(d) This tradition says that all Muslims had fled away, except ʿAlī and Abū Dujānah. It is agreed upon by almost all traditions. But some other narrations add some more names, and if you add all the names it would appear that there had remained about thirty persons with the Messenger of God. But those traditions cancel each other. If you ponder on the events and the circumstantial evidence, the truth will become clear to you. You should not forget that these stories and traditions are a sort of witness for various tendencies—for and against—and have passed through many bright and dark strata before reaching us.

(e) This tradition says that God sent an angel who returned Ḥamzah's

liver to its place. This statement is not found in most of the traditions. A different version is found in some other narrations. For example, (the author of) *al-Durr al-manthūr*, narrates from Ibn Abī Shaybah, Aḥmad and Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Masʿūd, inter alia, in a *hadith* that he said:

> "Then Abū Sufyān said: 'There was some mutilation of the people [that is, of Muslim martyrs], although it was not done by the majority of us. Neither I ordered it nor forbade it; neither I liked it nor disliked it; neither it pleased me nor displeased me.' " [Ibn Masūd] said:
>
> "Then they looked, and there was Ḥamzah with his belly ripped open. Hind took his liver and chewed it, but she could not eat it. The Messenger of God asked: 'Did she eat any part of it?' They said: 'No.' [The Messenger of God] said: 'God could not allow any part of Ḥamzah to enter the Fire.' "

Traditions, both ours and others', say that the Messenger of God was seriously wounded that day; there was skull fracture in his forehead, and his incisors were broken and middle incisor damaged …

(4) Ibn Isḥāq, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir narrate from Ibn Shahāb, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Ḥayyān, ʿĀṣim b. ʿAmr b. Qatādah and al-Ḥaṣīn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAmr b. Saʿd b. Muʿādh and others—all have narrated some of the events of the battle of Uḥud: They have said: "When Quraysh suffered on the day of Badr, and the scattered remnants of their army reached Mecca, and Abū Sufyān too returned with his trade-caravan, then ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Rabīʿah, ʿIkrimah b. Abī Jahl and Ṣafwān b. Umayyah together with some other Qurayshites (whose fathers, sons and/or brothers were killed in Badr), went to him. They talked with Abū Sufyān and all those who had any trade-goods in that caravan and suggested [as follows]: 'O people of Quraysh, surely Muḥammad has aggrieved you and killed your best personalities. Therefore, help us with this wealth to fight against him, in order that we may take revenge of our casualties from him.' They did so. Then the Quraysh resolved to fight the Messenger of God, and came out with the flower of their army. They also took their women with them for their protection and also in order that they would not flee (from the battle-ground). Abū Sufyān came out at the head of the army. They proceeded until they came down at ʿAynayn—a mountain in the depth of al-Sanjah on a canal in

the valley adjoining Medina.

"When the Messenger of God and the Muslims heard about the polytheists that they had come down where they did, the Messenger of God said: 'I have seen (in dream) a cow slaughtered, and saw the tip of my sword jagged, and saw that I had put my hand in an invulnerable coat of mail, and I interpreted it (to mean) Medina. Therefore, if you think (it advisable), you should stay inside Medina and leave them where they have come down; then if they stayed (there) they would be staying in the worst place, and if they entered [our City] we should fight them in it.'

"The Quraysh occupied their position at Uḥud on Wednesday, and stayed there on Thursday and Friday. The Messenger of God proceeded after praying the Friday-prayer and reached the mountain-pass of the Uḥud. The two [forces] met on Saturday, 15th Shawwal, the third year [of hijrah].

"ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy agreed with the opinion of the Messenger of God that they should not go out to meet the enemy; and the Messenger of God disliked going out of Medina. But some Muslims—some from among those whom God later honored with martyrdom in Uḥud, and some others who had missed the battle of Badr and were not present on that occasion—said: 'O Messenger of God, come out with us against our enemies, so that they should not think that we were afraid of them or felt weaker.' ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy said: 'O Messenger of God, stay inside Medina and do not go out to meet them. Because, by God, we never went out of it to meet an enemy of us but he bested us, and never did an enemy enter Medina to fight us but we vanquished them. Therefore, let them be, O Messenger of God; then if they stayed they would stay with difficulty; and if they entered [the City] even the women, children and men would fight them with stones from above [the roofs]; and if they returned, they would return disappointed as they had come.'

"But the people were still urging the Messenger of God [to proceed out of Medina]—these were the people who wanted to fight against the enemy. [This continued] until the Messenger of God entered [his house] and wore his cuirasses—and it was on Friday after the prayer—then he came out to [the companions]. In the meantime the people regretted [their persistence] and said [to

the Prophet]: 'We have compelled the Messenger of God and it was not good of us. Therefore you may sit back if you wish.' The Messenger of God said: 'It is not proper for a prophet—once he has put on his cuirasses—to remove them without waging the war.'

"The Messenger of God came out with one thousand of his companions. When they were proceeding between Medina and Uḥud, ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy went back with one-third of the people, [leaving the Prophet]. The Messenger of God proceeded on. When he was passing through the story-field of Banū Ḥārithah, a horse whisked its tail which caught the sword-tip [of the rider] and pulled it out. The Messenger of God (who liked good omens but did not believe in bad ones) said to the owner of the sword: 'Gather your sword, because I find that swords will surely be drawn today.' The Messenger of God went on until he came down at the mountain-pass of the Uḥud from the run of the valley to the mountain. He kept Uḥud at his back, and took position for the battle—and there were seven hundred persons with him.

"The Messenger of God gave the command of the archers—and they were fifty in number—to ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr, and said to him: 'Protect us from the mountain [side] by arrow, so that they do not come to us from our behind; you stay at your place, no matter the battle goes against us or for us; [because] we shall be attacked from your side.' The Messenger of God was wearing two coats of mail." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Ibn Jarīr narrates from al-Suddī in a hadith, enter alia: "The Messenger of God proceeded to Uḥud with one thousand men. He had promised them victory if they would remain patient. Then ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy returned back with three hundred persons. Abū Jābir al-Salamī pursued them to call them back; but they thwarted his efforts and said to him: 'We do not know how to fight; and if you listen to us you too should come back [to Medina] with us.' " (*ibid.*)

al-Suddī said about the words: When two parties from among you had determined that they should show cowardice: "They were Banū Salmah and Banū Ḥārithah who wanted to return when ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy went back, but God protected them; and the Messenger of God remained with seven hundred men." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: These were two clans from among the Helpers: Banū Salmah from the Khazraj and Banū Ḥārithah from the Aws.

(5) Ibn Abī Isḥāq, al-Suddī, al-Wāqidī, Ibn Jarīr and others have narrated: "The polytheists reached Uḥud on Wednesday in Shawwāl, 3 A.H., and the Messenger of God proceeded to meet them on Friday; and the battle took place on Saturday, 15th Shawwāl. The incisors of the Messenger of God were broken and his face was wounded. Then the Emigrants and the Helpers returned after fleeing away; and seventy of the Muslims were martyred. The Messenger of God stood firm accompanied by those who had remained with him until he removed [the enemies]. The polytheists had mutilated a group [of martyrs], but Ḥamzah was mutilated worst of all." (*Majmaᶜ al-bayān*)

Author's comments: There is a great number of traditions about the events of Uḥud. We have narrated, and shall narrate later, only a few of them, on which depends understanding of the verses revealed on this subject. These verses throw light on its various aspects:

Some deal with the cowardice of those who retreated or disagreed with each other or wanted to return to Medina cowardly.

Others admonish and censure those who had fled leaving the Messenger of God in the thick of the battle—although God had forbidden them to do so.

Still others praise those who were martyred before the others had fled, and those who bravely stood firm and did not leave the Prophet, and continued to fight till their last breath.

Lastly, there are verses extolling those who steadfastly continued to fight till the end of the battle but were not martyred.

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Verses 130-138

These verses call to the good and restrain from the vice and evil. Yet, they are not without some connection with the preceding and following verses dealing with the battle of Uḥud. They describe some undesirable conditions and reprehensible traits present in the believers at that time, which displeased God. Such things had made them vulnerable to weakness and infirmity and led them to disobedience of God and His Messenger. The verses thus focus on the events of Uḥud from another angle.

Also, the verses guide the believers to protect themselves from these devastating entanglements and ruinous obstacles; they invite them to piety, fear of God and trust in Him and urge them to be firm in obedience to God's Messenger. These nine verses, therefore, contain exhortation and warning: they awaken in the believers longing to hasten towards good, that is, spending in the way of God in ease as well as in straitness, restraining their anger and forgiving the people's faults; all are joined together under the heading of spreading good in the society, patience in the face of grievance and injury, and refraining from repaying evil with evil. It is the only way of preserving society and making it strong and energetic. Refraining from interest is an essential concomitant of this spending benevolently and doing good to others. That is why the verses begin with it; it paves the way for an appeal to good-doing and spending.

Under the verses of spending and interest in the chapter of The Cow, we have already explained that spending in all its aspects is the cornerstone of society. It is the virtue that vitalizes the human society with the spirit of unity; it channels its scattered resources to achieve happiness and felicity in this life, and strengthens it to ward off every pernicious perversion. Interest is diametrically opposed to benevolent spending in this respect.

God encourages them to these virtues. Then He encourages them to return to their Lord again and again even if they have committed sins and errors; they should not lose hope of His mercy even if they have done something which He dislikes; they must repent and seek pardon from Him repeatedly without laziness or negligence.

By doing good to others and returning to God time and again, they would proceed on the straight path of a happy life; they will never go

astray or stop at any dangerous point.

This Qur'anic description is the best way to guide man to perfect himself when he finds some defects in his life; the finest means of curing spiritual ailments that sometimes creep into otherwise good souls and threaten man with downfall and ruin.

Qur'anic Teaching: How it Joins Knowledge with Practice

The Qur'an uses a unique method for its divine teachings. During the whole period of twenty-three years of its revelation, it demonstrated all the basic principles through primary practical elements. When the audience put it into practice, the resulting picture was used as the primary element for teaching the next higher principle. At this stage, if there were any defects in the result of the first practical test, they were corrected and the good components were reused. The bad components were condemned while the good ones were praised, and their doer was promised success and accorded appreciation.

The Mighty Book of God is a Book of knowledge and practice—it is not a book of theories and hypotheses, nor a mysterious tome to be accepted blindly. This Divine Book is like a teacher. The teacher puts academic principles before his students without giving them too much detail in the beginning; then he tells them to act upon it [doing practical tests, or solving mathematical problems]; then he checks what they have done and analyses its correct and wrong procedures; he explains to them where they have gone wrong, where they have strayed from the right path, admonishing them [to be careful in the future] and threatening [to punish them if the same mistake happened again]; he praises where they have used right procedure and arrived at the correct result; he promises them of reward and appreciates their diligence. Then he tells them to do it again. He goes on training them until they reach the point of perfection and their efforts are always crowned with success.

What we have just mentioned is among the Quranic realities that anyone who meditates on the initial stages of Quranic teachings may see. Take the subject of jihād, for example. First, it describes the basic principles of jihād: *Fighting is enjoined on you …* [2:216]. It enjoins the believers to fight in the way of God; then it comments on the events of Badr and throws light on its various aspects, giving them further guidance; then it takes up the story of Uḥud, then of another battle, and so on. Likewise, God narrates the stories of previous prophets and their peoples, and after showing the truth behind

them, turns them into lessons to be learnt and a code of life to be followed. Some verses within these sets are based on the same principle. For example: *"therefore travel in the earth and see what was the end of the rejecters"* [3:137]; *And how many a prophet has fought with whom were myriads of godly men …* [3:146].

Commentary

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

(3:130-132) ***O you who believe! do not devour interest making it double and redouble, and fear Allah, that you may be successful. And guard yourselves against the fire which has been prepared for the unbelievers. And obey Allah and the Messenger, that you may be shown mercy.***

We have explained how "devouring" is used for "taking." The phrase, "making it double and redouble", points to overriding characteristic of interests; interest, per se, multiplies and increases the lender's wealth many-fold—by depleting the debtor's money adding it to the creditor's capital.

The sentence, "And guard yourselves against the fire which has been prepared for the unbelievers", indicates that the interest taker is an unbeliever, as has been explained under the verses of interest in the chapter of The Cow: *And Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner* [2:276].

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

(3:133) ***And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth; it is prepared for the pious ones.***

al-Musāraʿah (to rush, to make haste); it is commendable in good deeds and reprehensible in bad ones.

The Qur'an, in most of the places, joins forgiveness with the Garden.

It is because the Garden is a place of purity and cleanliness; the impurities of sins and filth of vices cannot enter it, nor can a person get tarnished by them—except after forgiveness and removal of that filth.

The forgiveness and the Garden—described in this verse—run parallel to what is mentioned in the following two verses. The forgiveness corresponds with the verse, *And those who when they commit an indecency or do injustice to their souls …*; and the Garden stands face to face with the verse, *Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in straitness.*

… and a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth: *al-ʿArḍ* (lit: width) here denotes spaciousness, extensiveness; it is a common usage; the expression metaphorically implies that it is spacious to the utmost, or to an extent that human imagination cannot reach it. Also, it has another meaning which we shall explain under the "Traditions."

The clause, *it is prepared for the pious ones*, paves the way for description of the characteristics of the pious ones which is given in the coming verses. The main idea is to describe those characteristics of the believers which are relevant to the present situation, that is, after the battle of Uḥud (when they had displayed, and suffered from, weakness and disobedience), because they were expected to participate in other similar battles and undergo similar situations, where they would be in great need of unity, harmony and solidarity.

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

(3:134) ***Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in straitness, and those who restrain (their) anger and forgive men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others).***

al-Sarrāʾ and *al-ḍarrāʾ* (that which pleases man or displeases him) that is, ease and difficulty. *al-Kaẓm* literally means to tie the mouth of waterskin after filling it; then it was metaphorically extended to a man filled with anger or sorrow who restrains or suppresses his emotions. *al-Ghayẓ* (translated here as "anger") denotes stirring of feeling of revenge, when one faces many unpleasant things; it is different from *al-ghaḍab* (generally translated as "wrath") which refers to the intention of revenge or punishment. That is why we say "God afflicted them with His wrath", but do not say, "God was angry with them."

The sentence, *and God loves the doers of good (to others)*, indicates that the preceding characteristics define "the doers of good", that is, to other people. As for doing good in relation to God is concerned, it is defined in the following verse: *… and as good news for the doers of good. Surely those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then they continue on the right way, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. These are the dwellers of the Garden, abiding therein: a reward for what they did* [46:12–14].

The doing of good, mentioned in the verse under discussion, is delineated by the preceding words, "Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in straitness …"; these good characteristics have no value in the eyes of God if they were not done "for Him", as has been described in many preceding verses, example: *The likeness of what they spend in this life of the world is as the likeness of wind …* [3:117].

The above reality may also be inferred from ch. 29, vr. 69: *And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our way; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good.* One may be said to be striving hard only if one does something against one's desires and natural instincts. It may happen only when a man firmly believes in matters which demand such sacrifice and steadfastness in face of natural desires and longings. It requires firm faith and true belief—they must say, Our Lord is God, and then continue steadfastly on it—and demands relevant action, that is, they must strengthen this belief by striving in sincere worship of God, spending benevolently in His way and living in the society with good conduct and irreproachable behavior. It appears from it that doing good, means performing all actions in proper way by remaining firm and steadfast in the divine faith, in the belief in God.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا
لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

(3:135-136) ***And those who when they commit an indecency or do injustice to their souls remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their faults—and who forgives the faults but Allah?—and (who) do not knowingly persist in what they have done. (As for),***

these—their reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and excellent is the reward of those who act (righteously).

al-Fāḥishah (indecent, shameful action); it is generally used for fornication.

As the word, *al-ẓulm* (injustice) has been used parallel to indecency, it should denote all other big or small sins. Alternatively, if "indecency" is taken to mean big sins, then "injustice" would mean small sins only. The clause, *remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their faults*, indicates that the plea for forgiveness should emanate from remembrance of God—it should not be just a verbal repetition, based on habit. The sentence, *and who forgives the faults but Allah?*, encourages man to return to God, and reminds him to take refuge, and seek shelter, in Him. The proviso, "and (who) do not knowingly persist in what they have done", is an essential part of asking forgiveness from God. Persistence in sins distorts the psyche to such an extent that remembrance of God does not bring any benefit to it; such behavior shows that the person concerned gives no importance to divine command, dishonors the sanctity of religion and behaves arrogantly against God; in such a situation neither servitude can survive nor remembrance can be of any use. For the same reason was added another proviso, that is, "knowingly." This phrase indicates that "injustice" (in the preceding clause) includes small sins too; persistence in sins—whether big or small—shows disregard to the divine command, indifference towards His authority. The phrase, "what they have done", therefore covers big as well as small sins, and refers to the indecency and injustice mentioned in the beginning of the verse: but small sin is not included in indecency, therefore it is injustice to one's soul indeed.

Their great reward is described in the next verse, *(As for) these—their reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens …* . It is the same things which the believers are exhorted to hasten to: "And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden …" Looking at this beginning and end, it may be seen clearly that they have been enjoined to hasten to spending benevolently, restraining their anger, forgiving the people and asking forgiveness for their faults.

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

(3:137) ***Indeed there have been examples before you; therefore travel in the earth and see what was the end of the rejecters.***

al-Sunan (is plural of *al-sunnah*, the way or tradition followed by the society). The believers have been told to travel in the earth, in order that they could learn lessons from archeological remains of ancient people and bygone generations. They should ponder about those pharaohs and nimrods, those kings and emperors—where did all of them go to? Their towering palaces, their accumulated treasures, their gilded thrones and their fully-equipped armies—nothing could avail them in the least; now they are just a few names to serve as examples and lesson for those who meditate, and as tourist attraction for the carefree and oblivious persons.

As for protecting their monuments, preserving their statues and endeavouring to find out how great they were in their times and how magnificent their splendor was in that era, it is a matter which the Qur'an does not care about. It is nothing but idolatry in a new disguise. We shall explain this topic, God willing, in a separate discourse in which we shall analyze the meaning of idolatry.

هَٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

(3:138) ***This is a clear statement for men, and a guidance and an admonition for the pious ones.***

The classification looks at the degrees of its effect. It is just a clear statement, a faithfully transmitted message for some people, while for others it is an admonition and guidance.

Examining Narrations

(1) The Prophet was asked about the words, *a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth.* "If the extensiveness of the Garden is as the heavens and the earth, then where will the Fire be?" He said: "Glory be to God ! When the day comes, where does the night go?" (*Majmaᶜ al-bayān*)

Author's comments: al-Suyūṭī has narrated in, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, from al-Tanūkhī that [the Byzantine Emperor] Heraclius had written to the Messenger of God a letter in which, inter alia, he had asked about this verse, and the Prophet had replied it as described above. He has also narrated through another chain from Abū Hurayrah that someone asked

the Prophet this question and he replied as above.

The above reply has been interpreted as follows: The Fire is in the Knowledge of God as night remains in the Knowledge of God when day comes.

Comment: If it means that the Fire is not away from the Divine Knowledge, then it does not solve the problem, because the question was about the place of the Fire, not about the Knowledge of God. If, on the other hand, it means that possibly there could be another place for the Fire beyond the heavens and the earth, then it might be tenable, but then the comparison of the Garden and the Fire with day and night would be out of place—because the night does not go out of the heavens and the earth when the day comes. Obviously this interpretation does not offer an acceptable explanation of the hadith.

I believe that the tradition points to another theme: The hereafter (with all its felicity and infelicity) is similar to this world with all its happiness and sorrow. Likewise, the man in the hereafter will be the same man who was in this world—as appears from the Qur'an and traditions. Nevertheless, the system governing the hereafter will be different from the ones permeating this world. The hereafter is the place of eternity and infinity, while this world is transitory and evanescent. That is why man would eat and drink, marry and enjoy all comforts of the Garden but would not undergo the consequences attendant to those enjoyments in this world. In the same way, man would burn in the fire of the Hell and suffer pain and agony in food and drink, abode and companions, yet would not be affected by it in the way he would have been in this life. In the hereafter, he would live eternal life without being affected by middle or old age or becoming senile or decrepit. It is because these effects and concomitants are products of the system of this world; they are not essential parts of every system—they would not be found in the system of the next world. It is this world, not the hereafter, which is the place of conflict and struggle, contrast and contradiction.

Now ponder on our own observation of the events. When we look at current happenings, we cannot see the previous events; if we see the night, then the day is absent from us. But nothing is absent from God; past, present and future—all is present before God, and there is no contrast or contradiction between them on that level. It means that the day and the night and their concomitant events contradict and cancel each other when they are governed by material system and movement. But when the same day and night and their concomitants are put under another system, there

remains no contrast and contradiction among them. It may be inferred from the words of God: *Have you not considered (the work of) your Lord, how He extends the shade? And if He had pleased He would certainly have made it stationary; then We have made the sun an indication of it, Then We take it to Ourselves, taking little by little* [25:45–46].

If it is possible in contradictory things like day and night, it may equally be possible for the heavens and the earth to house the Garden equal in size to themselves and then accommodate another thing like the Hell of the same size; it will be possible, not under this worldly system, but according to the system prevailing in the hereafter. There may be found similar expressions in traditions. For example: "Verily grave is an orchard from the orchards of the Garden, or a pit from the pits of the Fire." Or, "The grave of a believer is widened for him to the extent of his sight."

In the same way should be explained these words of the Prophet. Otherwise, if it is taken to mean that God is not oblivious of the night when He knows the day, it would not dovetail with the question. Likewise, if it were to mean that the night exists somewhere else when the day comes, it would invite another objection: The night cannot co-exist with the day at any place; and if we look at its reality then the night is a conic shade of the earth resulting from the sunlight—the light and shade rotating around the earth. Thus the day and the night are continuously revolving around the earth—without one merging into, or cancelling, the other.

There are other traditions of similar style. For example, it has been narrated about the Qur'anic words: *That Allah may separate the impure from the pure …* [8:37]: "When the sun sets, where does this light, spread on the earth, go?" We shall explain it later on.

(2) It has been narrated in, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, about the words: *and those who restrain (their) anger and forgive men*: al-Bayhaqī has narrated from ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn that a slave girl was pouring water on him in preparation for prayer. The pitcher fell from her hand on his face contusing it. He raised his head (looking) at her. She said: "Verily God says: 'and those who restrain (their) anger.' " He said: "I have restrained my anger." She recited: "and forgive men." He said: "God has forgiven you." She recited: "and God loves doers of good (to others)." He said: "Go, you are free."

Author's comments: It is narrated also from the Shīʿī chains. The tradition obviously shows that the Imām interprets "good-doing" as something more than the preceding two virtues, and in fact it is so in its general terms,

although the above virtues are concomitants of good-doing, and possibly they may be used for defining the "good-doing."

There are very numerous traditions on good manners and virtuous conduct, that is, spending benevolently, restraining anger and forgiving faults, narrated from the Prophet and the Imāms of the Ahl al-bayt; we shall quote them later in a more appropriate place.

(3) It is narrated from ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ghanm al-Dawsī that the verse, *And those who when they commit an indecency …*, was revealed about Bahlul, the grave-digger. He used to dig graves [to steal shrouds]. Once he dug the grave of a girl from the Anṣār, took out her body and removed her shroud. She was beautiful and of fair complexion; so the Satan tempted him and he committed fornication with her. Then he felt remorse and came to the Prophet, but he turned him out. Then the people dissociated from him; and he too secluded himself from others, spending his time in worship and repentance in some mountains of Medina—until God accepted his repentance and revealed this verse about him. (*al-Majālis*, al-Ṣadūq)

Author's comments: It is a detailed tradition which we have abridged here. If it is a correct *hadith*, then it would be a separate cause for the verse's revelation apart from the general reason which covers all the verses of the story of Uḥud.

(4) al-Bāqir said concerning the words, *and (who) do not knowingly persist in what they have done*: "Persistence is that a sinner commits a sin and does not ask God for forgiveness nor does he make up his mind to repent—so that is persistence." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ᶜAyyāshī)

(5) Aḥmad has narrated from the Prophet that he said: "Iblīs said: 'O Lord, by Thy Honor! I shall not cease leading children of Adam astray as long as their souls shall remain within their bodies.' God then said: 'By My Honor! I shall go on forgiving them as long as they ask Me for forgiveness.' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(6) al-Ṣādiq said: "There is no small (sin) with persistence, and there is no big (sin) after seeking (God's) forgiveness." (*al-Kāfī*)

(7) The same Imām said, inter alia, in a *hadith*: "… and there is in the Book of God a deliverance from ruin, an insight from blindness, and a healing for what is in the breasts; (found) in what God has enjoined you to seek (His) forgiveness and to repent. God says:

And those who when they commit an indecency or do injustice to their souls remember God and ask forgiveness for their faults—and who forgives the faults but God?—and (who) do not knowingly persist in what they have done. And He says: *And whoever does evil or acts unjustly to his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, he shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful* [4:110]. So this is what God has enjoined about asking (His) forgiveness, and has put with it the condition of repentance and refraining from what God has forbidden. (It is) because He says: *To Him do ascend the good words and the good deed lifts them up* [35:10]. This verse implies that the plea of forgiveness is not lifted up to God except by good deed and repentance." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: The Imām has inferred abstinence from sin and not repeating it after repentance from the word, do not knowingly persist; likewise the fact, that repentance and plea of forgiveness require good deed afterwards, has been inferred from the generality of "good words" in the verse, *To Him do ascend the good words.*

(8) al-Ṣādiq said: "When the verse, *And those who when they commit an indecency* …, was revealed, Iblīs ascended a mountain in Mecca, Thawr by name, and screamed very loudly to his afreets. They all gathered near him and said: 'O our leader, why have you called us?' He said: 'This verse has been revealed; now who would deal with it?' An afreet from among the satans stood up and said: 'I will see to it with such and such means.' (The Iblīs) said: 'You cannot do it.' Then another (afreet) stood up and said something similar (to the first one) and (Iblīs) said: 'You are not for it.' Then the Whispering Slinking (satan) said: 'I shall deal with it. [Iblīs] said: 'By what means?' He said: 'I shall promise them and tempt them until they would commit a sin; and when they have committed it, I would make them oblivious of asking for forgiveness.' [Iblīs] said: 'You are [fit] for it.' Then he entrusted this task to him up to the Day of Resurrection." (*al-Majālis*, al-Ṣadūq)

Author's comments: This tradition has also been narrated through Sunnī chains.

Verses 139-148

The verses, as you see, complete the talk which had begun with the words, *O you who believe! …* [3:130], while those verses with their orders and prohibitions had paved the way for these which contain the main purpose including command, prohibition, praise and stricture.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

(3:139) ***And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.***

al-Wahn (according to al-Rāghib, is infirmity and weakness in body or character. Here it refers to their weakness of will-power, carelessness in establishing the religion and lack of courage in the face of its enemies. *al-Ḥuzn* (grief) is opposite of *al-farḥ* (joy, happiness); it afflicts a man when he loses a favorite possession, or something which he thinks belongs to him.

The words, *and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers* and *if a wound has afflicted you* (at Uḥud), *a wound like it has also afflicted the (unbelieving) people* [in the next verse] indicate that the believers had felt infirmity and grief because they had seen themselves afflicted by wounds and found the unbelievers gaining upper hand. Although the polytheists could not get total victory over the believers, nor the battle ultimately ended with the believers' decisive defeat, yet what had afflicted them was really hard and painful—martyrdom of seventy of their brave warriors. Add to it the humiliation that they had been overwhelmed on their own ground. All these factors together had caused extreme dejection and pessimism. The clause, *and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers* (which stands as the reason of these two prohibitions), shows that the prohibition was related to actual infirmity and grief, not to some expected behavior in future.

The promise, "you shall have the upper hand", is general and unrestricted, but it is followed by the proviso, "if you are believers." It therefore gives the following meaning: You should not be weak in your will-power, nor should you grieve for the lost victory, if you are true believers. It is

because belief is bound to give you upper hand over your enemies—belief is accompanied by piety and patience, and these two are the basis of victory and triumph. As for the wound which has afflicted you in this battle, you are not alone in it; the unbelievers too had suffered similar casualties. If you think it over, they have not gained over you in any way. Therefore, you should not feel depressed or grieved.

The address had started with the words, *O you who believe*; yet their gaining upper hand has been made conditional on their being believers. It implies that although the masses were not devoid of faith and belief, they had not adhered to the concomitants and requirements of that belief, like patience and piety; otherwise it would have brought out the desired effects.

This phenomenon is found in every group which is composed of people having different grades of belief; while there are some true believers, there are some of weak faith and yet others of sick hearts. This type of talk creates enthusiasm in believing souls, admonishes and revives the weak ones and censures and reprimands the hearts ailing with hypocrisy.

إِنْ يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِثْلُهُ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَاءَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

(3:140) ***If a wound has afflicted you*** **[at Uḥud]*, a wound like it has also afflicted the (unbelieving) people; and We bring these days to men by turns, and that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you, and Allah loves not the unjust.***

al-Qarḥ is used for effect of an external wound, while *al-qurḥ* denotes the effect of an internal wound like pimple or pustule. This difference has been given by al-Rāghib. The word metaphorically refers to all the calamities that had befallen the Muslims on the day of Uḥud; it looks at the whole Muslim community as a single body which had received a wound inflicted by the enemy—the wound referring to the martyrdom of the martyrs and injuries of the injured, and the tragedy that victory slipped through their fingers.

The sentence, "If a wound had afflicted you … and destroy the unbelievers", gives the reason of the command, "And be not infirm, and be not grieving"; as does the sentence, "and you shall have the upper hand

if you are believers"

The difference between the two sets of reasons is as follows: The sentence, "and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers", corrects their misconception. They had become disheartened and pessimistic because they thought that the polytheists had gained upper hand. God points out to them that it is they, not the polytheists, who have got the essential prerequisite of victory 'if they are believers'; and God had already declared: *and helping the believers is ever incumbent on Us* [30:47].

The second reason describes the condition of the two parties—the believers and the polytheists—or explains the underlying rationale, that is, the unvarying Divine practice to turn the fortunes among men.

…and We bring these days to men by turns: *al-Yawm* (day) is a considerable span of time that is necessary for an occurrence—thus its duration would differ from occurrence to occurrence. Generally it is used for the period between sunrise and sunset. Often it is used for kingdom, reign, power, etc., putting the time in place of the thing covered by it. They say, 'day of this group', 'day of such and such dynasty', that is, their precedence and rule over others; sometimes it denotes the period itself. It is this connotation which is meant in this verse. *al-Mudāwalah* (means, taking of a thing by many people one after another).

The sentence thus means: It is an invariable practice of God that He rotates these days among men by turns; these are not restricted to any one group nor prevented from another people; this system is based on common benefits only a part of which may be comprehended by your minds.

…and that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you eradicate and Allah loves not the unjust: The conjunction "and" joins it to a deleted clause; it was deleted to imply that human understanding cannot comprehend all of its aspects, it may know only a few features of it. What the believers would benefit from is mentioned in these two verses [3:140 & 3:141]: *that God may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you*; *… that God may purge those who believe and eradicate the unbelievers.*

As for the words, "that God may know those who believe", they imply manifestation of their belief after its being hidden. God's knowledge of events and things is the same as their existence. The things are known to God by their very existence. His knowledge is not like ours—because our knowledge and perception come through a form abstracted from the thing concerned. To say that God wills to know a thing, is the same as saying that

God wills to bring it into being. In the verse under discussion, God says, "that God may know those who believe"; the clause shows that there were believers already in existence; therefore, it would mean that He wished to make their belief manifest. As everything in this world is governed by the system of cause and effect, it was necessary that some things should happen which would make the belief of the believers manifest after it was hidden. (Try to understand it.) It is followed by the clause, "and take witnesses from among you" *al-shuhadā'* refers to the witnesses of deeds. The Qur'an has never used this word for "martyrs." Its use in the meaning of "those who are killed while fighting in the way of God" is a later usage, as we had explained under the verse, *And thus We have made you a medium nation that you may be witnesses for the people …* [2:143]. Moreover, the word "take" which has been used here, is not very appropriate for the martyrs of the battlefield; it is not said' 'God has taken Zayd as a martyr in His way'. But it is said: 'God has taken Abraham as a friend'; or 'God has taken Moses as one spoken to; or 'God has taken the Prophet as a witness for giving evidence for his *ummah* on the Day of Resurrection'.

Significantly, God has said, "and take witnesses from among you", instead of saying, take you as witnesses. Although verse 143 of the chapter of The Cow describes witnessing to the *ummah* (And thus We have made you a medium nation that you may be witnesses for the people …), but as we explained under that verse, it is a metaphorical use, ascribing to the whole; nation what in fact belongs to a particular group of the nation—it is not the whole *ummah* but only a few of them who will bear witness for the nation. This interpretation may possibly be supported by the ending clause, *and God loves not the unjust*.

وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

(3:141) *And that Allah may purge those who believe and eradicate the unbelievers.*

al-Tamḥīṣ (to purge) denotes purifying something from extraneous pollutions. *al-Maḥq* (to eradicate, to efface) signifies gradual depletion of a thing, eradicating it bit by bit. The said purification is one of the benefits of rotating the days among the people. It is separate from the above-mentioned benefit that God may know the believers. Distinguishing a believer from an unbeliever is one thing, and purifying his belief from pollutions of disbelief, hypocrisy and immorality is another. That is why it

has been put side by side with eradication of the unbelievers. God removes the ingredients of disbelief from a believer's character little by little until nothing remains there but the belief, pure and unsullied; and likewise He eradicates ingredients of disbelief, polytheism and deceit from the unbeliever bit by bit, until all is destroyed.

These are some of the reasons why God brings the days to men by turn, and why power does not remain confined to a particular group forever; and all affairs belong exclusively to God, He does whatever He pleases; and He does not do except that which is most suitable and most beneficial [to His creatures]; as He says: t*hus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth* [13:17]. Also, He has said shortly before the verses under discussion: *That He may cut off a portion from among those who disbelieve, or abase them so that they should return disappointed of attaining what they desired. You have no concern in the affair whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them, for surely they are unjust* [3:127–8]. God has denied here that His Prophet had any authority in the affair, reserving that power exclusively to Himself; He decides about His creatures as He pleases.

Look at the matters described in these verses: The days rotate among the people; it is done for the purpose of test and trial, in order that believers may be separated from unbelievers; believers may be purged and purified and unbelievers obliterated gradually. Add to it the declaration that the Prophet had no authority in this matter. All this together shows that a majority of the believers were under the impression that their being on the true religion was the complete cause of their victory—wherever they happened to fight. They thought that just because they were on truth, they must overpower the falsehood, no matter what their own condition; to them belonged all affairs, and they could not be deprived of it. They were further encouraged in this miscalculation when angels were sent to help them in Badr and they found themselves quite unexpectedly victorious over unbelievers.

But that was a misunderstanding which could nullify the system of test and purification; and that in its turn would negate the underlying rationale of command and prohibition, reward and punishment. That would lead to destruction of the foundation of religion. After all, divine religion is a religion of nature, it is not based on nullification of the customary procedure or of divine practice permeating the universe—the system that

victory and defeat result from their normal causes.

After explaining that the days rotate among the people for their test and trial, God now begins admonishing them for this serious misunderstanding of theirs, and explaining the real position to them.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

(3:142-143) ***Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you, and (He has not) known the patient? And certainly you desired death before you met it; so indeed you have seen it (even) while you look (at it).***

The misconception that they would enter the Garden without being tested, was an inseparable concomitant of the previously mentioned misunderstanding. They thought that because they were on truth and truth is not overwhelmed, they would always be victorious; that they would never be defeated, would never be vanquished. Obviously, if it were true, then every one who believed in the Prophet and entered into the believers' society, would find felicity in this world through victory and booty, and felicity in the hereafter in the form of forgiveness and the Garden. Then there would be no difference between the felicity in the hereafter in the form of forgiveness and the Garden. Then there would be no difference between the appearance of belief and its reality, no distinction between various ranks [of belief and piety]; the belief of a fighter and that of a patient fighter would be of the same value; a man who intended to do a good deed and actually did it when its time came, would be equal to him who intended but turned on his heels when faced with it.

Accordingly, the words, *Do you think that you will enter …*, have metaphorically put the effect in place of the cause. The complete meaning therefore is as follows: You thought that power is reserved for you; you would not be put to test, rather you would enter the Garden without going through a trial to separate the deserving from undeserving, to distinguish believers of higher ranks from those of lower grades.

The next verse demonstrates that their thinking was wrong. The words,

And certainly you desired death before you met it, so indeed you have seen it (even) while you look (at it), show that they had desired death before arriving at the battlefield; but when the desired death came to them and they looked at it, they did not come forward to get what they longed for; instead they showed cowardice and fled away. How can it be possible for them to enter into the Garden merely because of that expressed desire without being tested, without any procedure of purification? Was it not necessary to test them [to separate the truth from the falsehood]?

It shows that there is a deleted clause near the end of the verse. The complete sentence would be as follows: So indeed you have seen it, yet you did not come forward to get it even while you looked at it. Another possible interpretation: You just looked at the death, that is without doing any thing to meet it. Thus "looking" would metaphorically imply not grappling with the death. It is a reproach and censure.

Test and its Reality

There is no doubt that the Qur'an exclusively reserves the guidance to God. But according to the Qur'an, it is not limited to the voluntary guidance leading to the felicity, and happiness of this world or the hereafter. God says: *Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)* [20:50]. Everything is guided by God—those endowed with cognizance and understanding as well as the others. Also, the verse has left the guidance unrestricted so far as the goal and destination is concerned. Also, He says: *Who created, then made complete, and Who made (things) according to a measure, then guided (them to their goal)* [87:2–3]. These verses too are unrestricted like the former.

Obviously, this [general] guidance is other than the special guidance which is used as opposite of misleading, leading astray. This special guidance has in several cases been negated, giving way to error and straying, but the general guidance cannot be negated or erased from any creature. God says: *and Allah does not guide the unjust people* [62:5]; *and Allah does not guide the transgressing people* [61:5].

Also, it is obvious that this general guidance is separate from that guidance which merely points the way to the believer and the unbeliever alike. As God says: *Surely We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful* [76:3]. *And as to Thamūd, We showed them the right way, but they chose error above guidance* [41:17]. The guidance, mentioned in these two and other similar verses, is reserved for those who have understanding

and cognizance, while that mentioned in [20:50 and 87:2–3] "then guided it", and, "Who made (things) according to measure, then guided", is comprehensive and general in its subject as well as the goal.

Moreover, the latter verse bases the guidance on measuring; but the particular [voluntary] guidance does not mesh with measurement, that is preparation of causes in order to guide a thing to the goal of its creation. Although the voluntary guidance, being a part of the general system of this world, is also covered by divine measure, but here we are not looking at it from that angle.

However, this general guidance means that God guides everything to the perfection of its existence, and conveys it to the goal of its creation. It is because of this guidance that everything longs for, and resorts to, its basic requirements, like growth and development, completion and perfection, movements and action, etc. (This topic needs further explanation; God willing, we shall write on it later on.)

The divine words prove that the things are driven to their destinations and goals by a general divine guidance; nothing is outside this guidance. God has made it incumbent on Himself and He does not break His promise. He says: *Surely on Us is the guidance, and most surely Ours is the hereafter and the former* [92:12–13]. Added to the previously mentioned two verses, this verse too, in its generality, covers collective guidance for the societies as well as the individual guidance.

It is a right of the things on God that He should guide them, creatively, to their destined perfection, and legislatively to their appointed perfection. You have seen in the discourse of the Prophethood, how legislation becomes a part of creation, and how it is encompassed by divine decree and measure. Human species has an existence which demands for its completion a series of voluntary actions; and those actions in their turn spring from ideological beliefs and practical cognizance. It is therefore necessary for man to live under some laws and rules, no matter whether those laws are good or bad, right or wrong. Accordingly, it was necessary for the Creator to prepare for him a series of orders and prohibitions (that is, the shariah), and another chain of collective events and individual happenings. These events, interacting with those laws, shall bring man's potentials to fruition, turn his abilities into accomplishments. On reaching this stage, he shall be either happy or unhappy—the hidden secrets of his existence will be open. When this happens, then those events and that shariah will be called for test or trial.

Whoever does not heed the divine call and thus becomes liable to infelicity, the word of punishment is proved true against him—if he continues in that condition. All the things that happen to him—which are covered by divine commandment and prohibition—and which bring his potential to accomplishment, add more to his infelicity and unhappiness, even if he considers himself pleased with his current condition and feels happy with himself. This apparent happiness is just a divine plan [to let him sink deeper into error]. Ultimately he will find his infelicity and unhappiness in the very thing which, he thought, was the source of his felicity and happiness; his failure will spring from what he mistook for his achievement. God says: *And they planned and Allah (also) planned, and Allah is the best of planners* [3:54]; *… and the evil plan does not beset any save the authors of it …* [35:43]; *that they may plan therein; and they do not plan but against their own souls, and they do not perceive* [6:123]; *… We draw them near (to destruction) by degrees from whence they know not. And I grant them respite; surely My scheme is effective* [7:182–183]. The conceited man, in his ignorance of divine schemes, brags of his disobedience and recalcitrance thinking that he has succeeded in going ahead against the divine commands—while in fact his every step fulfils the divine plan against him. God says: *Or do they who work evil think that they will escape Us? Evil is it that they judge* [29:4]. The most wonderful clause on this subject is found in the verse 42 of ch. 13: *… but all planning is Allah's …*

All this planning, disobedience, injustice and transgression that these people indulge in against their religious responsibilities; all the events and happenings which they are faced with, and which serve to expose their hidden intentions, are all just a divine plan, a respite and a reprieve. They had a right on God that He should guide them to the end of their affairs—and He has done it; and God is predominant on His affairs.

When the same things are ascribed to the Satan, then [the terminology changes, and] various types of disbelief and disobedience are called Satanic misguidance; temptation towards them becomes Satanic call, his whispering, and his misleading inspiration; the events leading to that transgression are called Satanic embellishment and are regarded as his instruments, tools and traps. We shall describe it in the seventh chapter, God willing.

As for the believer in whose heart the belief is firmly rooted, whatever acts of obedience and worship are done by him and likewise the events occurring in his life that lead to those good deeds—they, in a way, deserved

to be called divine help, God's guardianship and His especial guidance. God says: *… and Allah aids with His aid whom He pleases …* [3:13]; *… and Allah is the Guardian of the believers* [3:68]; *Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into the light …* [2:257]; *… their Lord will guide them by their faith …* [10:9]; *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people …* [6:122]. These terms are used when these affairs are attributed to God. If they are ascribed to the angels, then they are called angelic helping and strengthening. God says: *… these they are in whose hearts He has impressed faith and whom He has strengthened with a spirit for Him* [58:22].

One thing more: The general guidance begins with the first moment of a thing's creation and accompanies it to the last point of its existence—as long as it is proceeding on its return journey to God. Likewise, it is being pushed on by the divine measure continuously, as is shown by the words, *And Who made (things) according to a measure then guided (them to their goal)* [87:3]. It is divine measures which cover the causes that govern a thing's existence, and it is the same measures which launch a thing progressively from one condition to the next and so on. Thus the measures constantly push the things forward.

As the measures drive them from behind, the appointed term (the last point of a thing's existence) pulls them from the front, as the divine words show: *We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them two, save with truth and (for) an appointed term; and those who disbelieve turn aside from what they are warned of* [46:3]. This verse ties the things with their final stage, that is the appointed terms. When one of the two related things dominates the other, then its relationship with the weaker partner is called attraction; and as the appointed terms are decisive and unalterable, they obviously pull and attract the things from the front.

Accordingly, everything is encompassed by divine forces: There is a force to push it, another to pull it, and a third to accompany it and bring it up. These are the basic forces confirmed by the Qur'an, apart from other forces which protect, watch over and accompany it like angels, satans and things like that.

Sometimes we arrange a thing's affairs in such a way as to ascertain whether it is fit for a certain purpose. It is called test or trial. Sometimes you do not know whether it is fit for the said purpose or not. At other times you know it but you want its hidden ability to be known to all. In both cases you oblige it to undergo certain relevant procedures—in order that

by accepting or rejecting them, it may expose its hidden characteristics. This procedure is called test, trial or examination. This same meaning fits the divine management. God obliges rational creatures (like man) to follow the rules of the shariah, and involves him into various happenings and events. All these [creative and legislative] impositions demonstrate the man's real worth, vis-a-vis, the purpose to which he is invited through religious call. And they are therefore called 'divine tests'.

But there is a difference between our test and the divine one. We generally do not know the hidden reality of the things; therefore when we conduct an examination, our real aim is to discern its hitherto unknown reality. But it is impossible for God not to know, and with Him are the keys of the unseen. Therefore, when He examines us, His aim is to train us by calling us to good result and felicity. He, by such test and trial, demonstrates to one and all the reality of the person so examined, in order that it may be known to all what should be his destination, whether he should be sent to the place of good reward or to the abode of chastisement.

That is why God has named such arrangements of His—legislating the shariah and assigning visitation and tribulation—as test and examination. In some verses He has described the general rule: *Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deed* [18:7]; *Surely We have created man from a small drop of intermingled life-germ; We mean to try him, so We have made him hearing, seeing* [76:2]; *… and We try you by evil and good by way of probation* [21:35]. Some other verses give specific details. For example: *And as for man, when his Lord tries him, then treats him with honor and makes him lead an easy life, he says: "My Lord has honored me." But when He tries him (differently), then straitens to him his means of subsistence, he says: "My Lord has disgraced me"* [89:15–16]; *Your possessions and your children are only a trial …* [64:15]; *… but that He may try some of you by means of others …* [47:4]; *… thus did We try them because they transgressed* [7:163]; *… and that He may test the believers by a gracious trial …* [8:17]; *Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and not be tried? And certainly We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will certainly know the liars* [29: 2–3]. Even for a prophet like Abraham, He says: *And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words …* [2:124]. He says regarding the sacrifice story of Ishmael: *Most surely this is a manifest trial* [37:106]; and says to Moses: *… and We tried you with (a severe) trying …* [20:40]. There are

many verses of this connotation.

As you see, these verses prove that test and trial bestrides everything related to man. It includes his existence and its various aspects like hearing, sight and life; the extraneous things that are somehow connected to him, like children, spouses, family, friends, possessions and prestige; and the things which he makes use of in one way or the other. The same is the case with their opposites, like death and all the troubles, hardships and misfortunes affecting a man. In short, the verses count everything, affair and situation of the world, related in any way to man, as a test and trial prescribed by God for him.

The verses also prove the generality of test as about the examinees. Each and every man has to undergo the test—be he a believer or unbeliever, a good man or bad, a prophet or someone else. It is an all-encompassing system and law, and none is exempted from it.

It appears from the above that the test is an established divine system, a practical procedure based on another creative system, that is, the general divine guidance—as far as it is related to those creatures who are held responsible for their actions like man—together with the measure and the appointed term which precedes and follows it, respectively.

It shows that this system is not subject to abrogation, because its abrogation would be tantamount to undermining the creation itself—which is impossible. This reality is implied by the verses which say that the creation is with truth and that Resurrection is truth. God says: *We did not create heavens and the earth and what is between them two, save with truth and (for) an appointed term* [46:3]; *What! did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?* [23:115]; *And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in sport. We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know* [44:38–39]; *Whoever be hoping to meet Allah, the term appointed by Allah will then surely come* [29:5]. There are many other verses of the same theme; and they prove that the creation is with the truth; it was not created in vain or without an aim, a goal. As all things are proceeding towards their destinations with truly appointed terms, pushed forward by true measures, and accompanied by true guidance, a general collision is bound to occur; and especially the persons held responsible for their actions are bound to be put to test; the test would involve them in such affairs which would bring their potentials—perfection and defect; happiness and unhappiness—into the realm of reality. This is what is called

test and examination—so far as the man is obliged to follow the dictates of religion is concerned. (Try to understand it.)

The above discourse also clarifies the meanings of eradication and purge. When a believer undergoes test and trial, it separates his hidden virtues from vices; also when a group labours under difficulties, it sets the believers apart from the hypocrites—those in whose hearts there is a disease. Both these situations are called purge, that is, purification, distinction.

Likewise, when an unbeliever or a hypocrite—with apparently good characteristics and enviable conditions—is regularly put under the divine tests, it gradually brings out his hidden evil and vice; and whenever a bad characteristic comes to surface, it removes and obliterates an apparent virtue. This is what the Qur'an calls eradication, that is, gradual obliteration of his shallow virtues. As God says: *and We bring these days to men by turns, and that God may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you; and God loves not the unjust. And that Allah may purge those who believe, and eradicate the unbelievers* [3:140–141].

The unbelievers also face another type of eradication: God informs us that the world is relentlessly driven towards the good of human beings when the religion will be purely for God. The Qur'an says: … *and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil)* [20:132]; *that the earth shall inherit it My righteous servants* [21:105].

Commentary continues:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

(3:144) ***And Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least; and Allah will reward the grateful.***

Death is passing away, end of the body's life. Slaying or killing denotes death arising from extraneous cause—intentional or otherwise. When the words, 'death' and 'killing', are used separately, the 'death' signifies a

general meaning which includes killing too; but when they are used side by side, then 'death' means natural death as opposed to killing. Turning back upon one's heels means returning. al-Rāghib has said:

> "They say, He turned back upon his heels, when he returns; 'he turns back upon his heels' is synonymous to 'it turns on its hooves'; also it is like the [Qur'anic] words: *so they returned retracing their footsteps* [18:64], or the idiom, 'he went back to his origin.' "

Turning back on one's heels is dependent on the conditional clause, "if then he dies or is killed"; it implies their apostasy—going out of religion—not merely retreating from the fight; because fleeing from the battle-ground has no connection with death or martyrdom of the Prophet, while there is a clear relation between his death or martyrdom and people's renouncement of Islam for disbelief. Moreover, it was not only in Uḥud that they had fled away from the battlefield; they had done so in some other battles too like, Ḥunayn, Khaybar, etc.; but God did not address them in such a severe tone, nor did He use such expression for their retreat. For example, He says regarding the battle of Ḥunayn: … *and on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth became strait to you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating* [9:25]. Therefore, it is clear that 'turning back upon your heels' in this verse means 'returning to your previous disbelief'.

The meaning of the verse—in its context of censure and stricture—is as follows: Muḥammad is but a messenger of God, like other messengers sent earlier by Him; his task is to convey the message of His Lord; he has no authority in the affairs; all the affairs are in the hand of God, and the religion is His religion; it will continue with God's authority—because God is to preserve it. Why should then your belief depend on Muḥammad's life? Why should you behave as if your religion would not survive the Prophet? Why do you give rise to the assumption that if Muḥammad were to die or be killed you would run away from God's religion, would return back on your heels to your previous disbelief? Will you go back to misguidance after finding the guidance?

This context provides a very strong proof that when the fighting became fierce on the day of Uḥud, the Muslims thought that the Prophet was killed, and they fled away from the battle-field. It confirms the reports of the traditions and history. For example, Ibn Hishām narrates in his *al-Sīrah* that Anas b. al-Naḍr (uncle of Anas b. Mālik) reached

where ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Ṭalḥah b. ʿUbaydillāh had gathered with other persons of the Emmigrants and the Helpers—and they had given themselves up. He asked: "What is holding you back?" They said: "The Messenger of God has been killed." He said: "Then what will you do with life after him? Die on what the Messenger of God has died on." Then he faced the (unbelieving) people, and fought them until he was martyred.

This retreat, this surrender, this giving themselves up, had only one meaning: Their belief depended on the Prophet; it would continue as long as he lived, and would disappear the moment he died. In other words, they wanted reward of this world for their belief, and it was this matter for which they were reprimanded by God. This connotation is supported by the concluding clause, "and God will reward the grateful." Note that the same clause has been repeated in the next verse, after the words, "and whoever desires the reward of this world. We shall give him of it and whoever desires the reward of the hereafter, We shall give him of it." (Ponder on its significance.)

The clause, "and God will reward the grateful", is a sort of exception—as the context shows; and it proves that among them there were a few who were grateful, who did not turn back on their heels nor did they retreat.

What is the reality of gratefulness? It is manifestation of the favor, display of the bounty. Its opposite is ungratefulness, which means hiding the bounty. How does one display a favor? It is done by using it in the place the donor had intended, in the way he would be pleased with, and to remember and mention the donor by tongue (and it is called praise) and heart (without forgetting him). For thanking God for any of His favors and bounties, you should remember Him at the time of using it, and should use it in the way He is pleased with—without transgressing the limits. There is nothing in this world but it is a bounty from the bounties of God; and He does not want us to use any of His bounties but in the way of His worship, in His obedience. He says: *And He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you count God's bounties, you will not be able to compute them; most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful* [14:34].

Accordingly, His absolute thanks—without any restriction—means to remember Him without forgetting Him, and to obey Him without disobeying Him. God says: *… and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me* [2:152]. It means as follows: Remember Me without polluting the remembrance with forgetfulness; and obey My command without spoiling it with disobedience. (The reader should not listen to him who says that it

would oblige us to do something beyond our power. Such comment arises from not paying attention to these divine realities, from being distant from the plane of servitude.)

We have explained in previous volumes the difference between verb and adjective. The verb shows the active agent (the doer) doing the work—no matter how temporary, how transitory, his relation with that work may be. But an adjective shows permanent relation between the agent and the attribute; it implies that the attribute has become an inseparable characteristic of the man. There is a world of difference between the phrases, 'those who worshipped idols', 'those who were patient', 'those who did injustice', and 'those who transgressed', on one hand, and the adjectives, 'the idol-worshippers', 'the patient ones', 'the unjust', and 'the transgressors', on the other. Here, in the verse under discussion, God has used the adjective, "the grateful"; it refers to those in whom the attribute of gratefulness is firmly rooted, who have inseparable connection with this virtue. Also, we have described that absolute gratitude demands that man should never remember anything—as everything is a divine bounty—without remembering God; and should not use anything—the divine bounty—except in His obedience. It is now clear that gratitude and thankfulness cannot be complete except with total sincerity towards God, with purification in knowledge and action. The grateful ones are those who are purified, sincere servants of God—those in whom the Satan can have no hope, who are beyond the Satanic designs and plans.

This fact is clear from the words of the Satan quoted in the Qur'an: *He* (Satan) *said: "Then by Thy Might I will surely beguile them all, except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones"* [38:82–83]; *He said: "My Lord! because Thou hast left me to stray, I will certainly make (evil) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to go astray, except Thy servants from among them, the freed* (purified) *ones"* [15:39–40]. Note that God did not refute this claim of the Satan. Again God quotes him as saying: *"He said: 'As Thou hast caused me to go astray, I will certainly lie in wait for them in Thy straight path. Then I will certainly come to them from before them and from behind them, and from their right-hand side and from their left-hand side; and Thou shalt not find most of them thankful' "* [7:16–17]. The last clause is an implied exception that some of them shall be thankful. Here the adjective, "purified" has been changed to "thankful." It can only mean that it is the purified ones who shall be grateful, and on whom the Satan has got no hold. The Satan's design is to make man forget

his Lord and to call him to sin and disobedience; [but he cannot ensnare the purified and grateful servants in this trap].

This explanation is further supported by a verse, coming later, which was revealed about this very battle: *(As for) those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met, only the Satan sought to cause them to make a slip on account of some deeds they had done, and certainly Allah has pardoned them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing* [3:155]. Read it in conjunction with the end of the verse under discussion, "and God will reward the grateful", and the end clause of the next verse, "and We will reward the grateful"; and keep in mind that these clauses are a sort of exceptions. Think over these verses together and you will discover sublime realities.

But someone has given a really astonishing explanation. He thinks that the verse just quoted, (*[As for] those of you who turned back only the Satan sought to cause them to slip*) refers to the story which says that the Satan cried aloud on the day of Uḥud that Muḥammad was killed; and this cry made the believers lose their hearts and flee from the battle-ground. Looking at this explanation, in light of the one given by us, one is amazed as to how trivially they have treated the Book of God, bringing it down from that height of reality and knowledge to such a lowly level.

The verse shows that there were a few believers on the day of Uḥud who did not show any weakness nor did they lose courage; nor did they give up the cause of God. It is they whom God calls "the grateful ones", and has confirmed that the Satan has got no power over them, nor has he any hope of ensnaring them. They have remained steadfast, grateful, not only in this battle; it is an inseparable characteristic of theirs, a deeply-rooted attribute. The Qur'an has nowhere used the adjective "the grateful" in appreciation except in these two verses, that is, *"And Muḥammad is no more than a messenger … and Allah will reward the grateful. And it is not for a soul to die … and We will reward the grateful."* Yet, He has not mentioned in either place what their reward will be; this silence speaks a lot about its greatness and value.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُؤَجَّلًا ۗ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ
الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا ۚ وَسَنَجْزِي
الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

(3:145) ***And it is not for a soul to die but with the permission of***

Allah (according to) the term that is fixed; and whoever desires the reward of this world, We shall give him of it, and whoever desires the reward of the hereafter, We shall give him of it; and We will reward the grateful.

It is an adverse allusion to their talk about their slain brethren which is referred to in a forthcoming verse: *O you who believe! be not like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren when they travel in the earth or engage in fighting: Had they been with us, they would not have died and they would not have been slain …* [3:156]; also it refers to the talk of a group among them: *"Had we any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here"* [3:154]. It should be noted here that these people were from among the believers, not the hypocrites who had already left the Messenger of God and had not participated in the fighting at all.

This talk of theirs implies that a person's death was not dependent on God's permission, nor was it a decisive process emanating from firm divine decree. If such an idea were correct then it would negate the Kingdom of God, nullify the precise divine arrangements. (We shall explain, God willing, in the beginning of the chapter of The Cattle, what fixation of the term means.)

It necessarily follows that those who had spoken such words, had accepted Islam because they thought that all affairs were in the hands of the Messenger of God and the believers. In other words, when they accepted Islam, their aim was to gain worldly benefits, as we have explained earlier. But those who desisted from such thoughts, their goal was the hereafter. That is why God says: *and whoever desires the reward of this world, We shall give him of it, and whoever desires the reward of the hereafter, We shall give him of it.* Here God has said, "We shall give him of it", instead of saying, "We shall give him it." It points to a fine distinction: Often man has some desires, but fails to provide total causes leading to the total desires, and consequently is not given all that he had desired. Therefore, if the causes conform with all the desires, he shall be given all desires; and if the causes agree with some of the desires, he will get only some of it. God says: *Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away. And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer; (as for) these their striving shall surely be thanked* [17:18–19]. Also He says: *And that there is not for*

man (aught) except what he strives for [53:39].

Thereafter, He has specially mentioned the grateful ones, excluding them from both groups; saying, *and We will reward the grateful*. It is because they work only for the sake of God, without looking at any thing of this world or the hereafter—as we have explained earlier.

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِبِّيُّونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَآتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

(3:146-148) ***And how many a prophet has fought with whom were myriads of Godly men; so they did not lose heart on account of what befell them in Allah's way, nor did they weaken, nor did they abase themselves; and Allah loves the patient . And their saying was no other than that they said: "Our Lord! forgive us our faults and our extravagance in our affair, and make firm our feet and help us against the unbelieving people." So Allah gave them the reward of this world and an excellent reward of the hereafter and Allah loves those who do good (to others).***

Ka-ayyin (how many), indicates great number; *min* (from), here is an explicative particle. *al-Ribbiyyūn*, plural of *al-ribbī*, like *al-rabbānī*, denotes a divine person, someone who is exclusively attached to God. Also it is said that it is plural of *rabā* (thousand) and thus means, thousands. *al-Istikānah* (means, to submit, to abase oneself).

The verse contains advice, sermon and lesson with a shade of admonition, together with some encouragement to the believers to follow in those Godly men's footsteps, so that God should give them the reward of this world and an excellent reward of the hereafter (as he had given those Godly men) and should love them for their good-doing, as He had loved them for it.

God has described some of their words and deeds in order that the believers may learn lessons from it, and adopt it as their motto. Then they would not be afflicted with what had afflicted them on the day of Uḥud

(where they were involved in undesirable words and deeds, which God was not pleased with). If they followed those Godly men, then God would join for them the rewards of both worlds as He had done for those Godly men.

God has characterized the reward of the hereafter as "excellent"; it points to its sublimity and high prestige in comparison to this world's reward.

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Verses 149-155

It is the continuation of the verses revealed about the battle of Uḥud. These verses exhort and encourage the believers to obey none except their Lord, because He alone is their Guardian and Helper; it calls them as witness that God had fulfilled His promise to them, and the debacle and disaster which they suffered on that day was brought upon them by their own hands, because they had transgressed the limits of what God had told them and His Messenger had invited them to; in spite of that God has forgiven them of their sins because He is Forgiving, Forbearing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تُطِيعُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ بَلِ اللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النَّاصِرِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

(3:149-150) ***O you who believe! If you obey those who disbelieve, they will turn you back upon your heels, so you will turn back losers. Nay! Allah is your Guardian and He is the best of the helpers.***

It may possibly be inferred from the context that the unbelievers—after the battle of Uḥud, when these verses were revealed—were putting ideas in the believers' minds (just as "friendly" advice!) to hold them back from fighting and to incite strife and disunity among them, in order to create rift and division in the camp of Islam. This implication might probably get support from the verses 173–175 coming later: *Those to whom the people said: "Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them" … It is only the Satan that frightens his friends; so do not fear them, and fear Me if you are believers.*

It has also been said that the verse alludes to the shouting by the Jews and the hypocrites on the day of Uḥud, "Muḥammad has been killed; you should return to your families." But this explanation is nothing.

The verse first made it clear to the Muslims that if they obeyed the unbelievers and were inclined towards their friendship seeking their help, they would suffer a great loss, that is, they would turn back to infidelity, would become unbelievers themselves. Then it strikes at this idea by showing them the bright reality that *Allah is your Guardian and He is the*

best of the helpers.

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۖ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

(3:151) ***We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they set up with Allah that for which He has sent down no authority, and their abode is the fire; and evil is the abode of the unjust.***

It is a beautiful promise to the believers that God will help them through terror and scare. The Messenger of God used to mention "scare" among the special bounties which God had reserved for him—not giving it to any other prophet. Such traditions have been narrated by both sects.

The clause, *because they set up with Allah that for which He has sent down no authority*, points to the fact that the polytheists set up such things as partners or colleagues for God, which have got no authority, no proof for it. The Qur'an repeatedly says that there is no authority, no proof, which could prove any partner or colleague for God. Among many types of polytheism is the rejection of the Creator by saying that some entities other than God—like time or matter—has caused the creation and goes on managing it.

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ مَا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۖ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

(3:152) ***And certainly Allah made good to you His promise, when you were extirpating them by His permission, until when you became weak-willed and disputed about the affair and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you loved; of you were some who desired this world and of you were some who desired the hereafter; then He turned you away from them that He might try you; and He has certainly pardoned you, and Allah is Gracious to the believers.***

al-Ḥass to extirpate by slaying.

The traditions unanimously say, and history records, that on the day of Uḥud, at first the believers overpowered the enemy and defeated them; they started slaughtering them and plundering their goods. But then most of the archers left their position at the mountain-pass, and Khālid b. Walīd with his group attacked and slaughtered ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr and the few archers who had remained with him. Now the way was clear for them to attack the believers from the rear—which they did. Seeing this, the fleeing polytheists turned back and put the Muslims to the sword, killing seventy of the companions and bringing utter defeat upon them.

Accordingly, the words, *And certainly Allah made good to you His promise*, affirms that God's promise of help—on the condition that they should remain on guard and be patient—was certainly fulfilled; the clause, *when you were extirpating them by His permission*, is applicable to the victory which God gave to them to begin with on the day of Uḥud; and the next clause, "until when you became weak-willed and disputed about the affair and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you loved", may be pointing to what the archers had done; they disputed one with the other, an overwhelming majority of them left their position and ran away to join those companions who were busy in gathering the booty. In this way they showed their lack of will-power; they differed among themselves and disobeyed the Prophet's order not to leave their place no matter what happened to the others. Accordingly, *al-fashal* (generally translated as 'to lose heart', 'to be weak-hearted'), would imply here, weakness or lack of will-power; obviously the meaning of weak-heartedness or cowardice would not be appropriate in this context, because they had not left their position because of any fear; rather it was because of the avarice of war-booty. If we take *al-fashal* for cowardice, then it would apply to the whole 'army'; and in that case, the adverb, "then", in the clause, "then He turned you away from them", would denote ordinal sequel, not sequence of time. The word, "disputed", proves that not all of them were united in that weak-willedness and disobedience; some of them were determined to carry on the order, and to continue in the obedience. That is why God follows it with the comment: "of you were some who desired this world, and of you were some who desired the hereafter"

…then He turned you away from them that He might try you: God stopped you from entangling with the idol-worshippers, after you manifested your lack of will-power, disputed one with the other and disobeyed

the Prophet—in short, after you became disunited. He did so in order that He might examine you and test your faith and patience in His cause. When the hearts and minds are disunited, it provides the strongest reason to conduct an examination, so that a believer may be distinguished from a hypocrite; such a test would also separate a believer who is firmly-rooted in belief and steadfast in conviction from the one who is inconsistent and fickle. Nevertheless, God has forgiven them by His grace, as He says, "and He has certainly pardoned you."

إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوُونَ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي أُخْرَاكُمْ فَأَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

(3:153) ***When you ran off precipitately and did not turn towards any one, and the Messenger was calling you from your rear, so He gave you another sorrow instead of (your) sorrow, so that you might not grieve at what had escaped you, nor (at) what befell you; and Allah is aware of what you do.***

al-Iṣʿād (to go far away on the ground) is different from *al-ṣuʿūd* which means to rise up, to ascend. They say, *Aṣʿada fi jānib al-barr* (he went far in the land), and *Ṣaʿada fi al-sullam* (he climbed up the ladder). It is said that *al-iṣʿād* is, sometimes, used in the meaning of *al-ṣuʿūd*.

The adverb, "when", is related to an implied verb, "remember" (that is remember when you ran off …); or to the verb in the preceding verse, "He turned you away"; or to the one after that, "He might try you", according to various explanations. *al-Layy* (means, to turn towards, to incline). According to *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, it is always used in negative (and never in affirmative), that is they do not say, *Lawaytu ʿalā kadhā* (I turned towards so-and-so).

In the clause, *and the Messenger was calling you from your rear*, the word, "rear" here is opposite of front. The fact that the Prophet was calling them from their rear, shows that they had fled away en masse from around him in such a way that the mob in the forefront was far off from the Prophet and the rear group was nearer; he was calling them but nobody was turning towards him—neither those in the front nor those in the rear. They ran off precipitately to save their own skins, leaving the Messenger

of God (blessings of God be on him and his progeny), almost alone surrounded by the hordes of the blood-thirsty enemies.

Of course, the words in the verse 144, *and Allah will reward the grateful*, (as explained earlier) prove that there were a few among them whose determination was not shaken; they did never retreat—neither in the beginning nor after the rumor spread that the Prophet was martyred, as is clear from the words, "if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?"

The words under discussion, *and did not turn towards any one, and the Messenger was calling you from your rear*, clearly show that the rumor of the Prophet's martyrdom spread among them after they had retreated and run away from him.

…so He gave you another sorrow instead of (your) sorrow, so that you might not grieve at what had escaped you, nor (at) what befell you; and Allah is aware of what you do: He changed their sorrow to another sorrow in order to divert their attention from this grief. This "another sorrow" that afflicted them was, in any case, a divine grace; because God says: "so that you might not grieve at what had escaped you, nor (at) what befell you;" and He has condemned such grief in His Book where He says: *So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you* [57:23]. Obviously, this "another sorrow" that would prevent them from that disliked grieving would be a grace and bounty. Accordingly, this "another sorrow" should refer to the remorse that overwhelmed them for what they had done, to the distress they felt for the victory that had slipped from their hands because of their weak will-power. Consequently the second sorrow mentioned in the clause, "instead of (your) sorrow", would refer to that undesirable grieving; the preposition *bi* in *bi-ghammin* (instead of sorrow) indicates exchange. The meaning is therefore as follows: You were grieving at what had escaped you and what had befallen you; God changed it to the remorse and distress for the lost victory.

Another alternative: *athābakum* (translated here as "He gave you") may contain the connotation of change. The meaning in this case will be as follows: He changed your remorse and distress to the grief, entitling you for its reward. Then the meanings of the two "sorrows" will interchange, vis-a-vis, the preceding explanation.

In either case, the sentence, "so He gave you another sorrow", branches out from the clause, "and He has certainly pardoned you"; and the next

verse, "Then after sorrow He sent down security upon you …", is closely related to it. The meaning: He pardoned you, then changed your sorrow to another sorrow to prevent you from that grief of yours which He was not pleased with, then He sent down upon you security in the form of slumber which overtook you.

A third alternative is apparently supported by the context, in that the sentence, "so He gave you another sorrow …", would branch from the immediately preceding clause, "When you ran off precipitately …"; in this case, "another sorrow" would refer to their running off and retreating from the battlefield; and the next phrase, *bi-ghammin* would be translated "because of the sorrow" (taking the preposition *bi* for the cause); it would then refer to the polytheists' attack on them from the rear which in its turn was the direct result of their disputation and disobedience. It is a good meaning. In this case, the clause, "so that you might not grieve …", would mean as follows: We explain these facts to you so that you might not grieve. Thus, it would fall into line with the words of God: *No misfortune befalls you on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allah: So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you; and Allah does not love any arrogant boaster* [57:22–23].

[The meaning: He gave you another sorrow that you ran away from the battle-ground, because the polytheists attacked you from the rear when you disputed among yourselves and disobeyed the Prophet. We explain it to you so that you might not grieve at what had escaped you, nor at what befell you.]

These three possible grammatical structure maintain the order of the verse and keep the sentences well-connected to each other. The exegetes have written many other possibilities. For example, to which sentence does the conjunctive, "so", join the words, "so He gave you another sorrow." What are the connotations of the first and the second "sorrow"? What is the import of the preposition *bi* in *bi-ghammin* (translated here as "instead of")? What is the significance of "so that you might not"? But they are not tenable in the least, and there is no use of quoting and commenting on them.

In the light of the first two meanings given by us, "what had escaped you", (in the clause, "so that you might not grieve at what had escaped you, nor [at] what befell you") would refer to victory and war booty; and "what befell you" to their slaughter and injuries.

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُعَاسًا يَغْشَىٰ طَائِفَةً مِنْكُمْ ۖ وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ۖ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ ۗ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ ۖ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا ۗ قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَىٰ مَضَاجِعِهِمْ ۖ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٥٤﴾

(3:154) ***Then after sorrow He sent down security upon you, a slumber coming upon a party of you, and (there was) another party who cared only for their own selves; they entertained about Allah thoughts of ignorance quite unjustly. They say: "Do we have any hand in the affair?" Say: "Surely the affair is wholly (in the hands) of Allah." They conceal within their souls what they would not reveal to you. They say: "Had we any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here." Say: "Had you remained in your houses, those for whom slaughter was ordained would certainly have gone forth to the places where they (now) lie;" and that Allah might test what was in your breasts and that He might purge what was in your hearts; and Allah knows what is in the breasts.***[1]

The verse shows that this slumber had overtaken only some, and not all, of the believers, as the clause, "a party of you", clearly says. These were the people who had come back to the Messenger of God after retreating and running off precipitately, and felt remorse and sorrow for what they had done. Far be it from God to pardon them mercifully while they were still fleeing away from the *jihād*, and were thus engaged in one of the greatest sins. God says about them, *and He has certainly pardoned you,*

1 *al-Amanah* (security); *al-nuʿās* (lethargy before sleep; light sleep; slumber); "slumber" is appositional substantive standing for "security." It is also possible to take *al-amanah* as plural of *al-ʾāmin* (peaceful) like *al-ṭālib* and *al-ṭalabah*; in that case it will be a circumstantial clause related to "you" in "upon you"; and "slumber" will become object of the verb, "sent down." *al-Ghashayān* (means, to cover, to envelop). (Auth.)

and Allah is Gracious to the believers, and it is unthinkable that God's grace would cover a sinner when he was actively engaged in open defiance and sin—until and unless he repented. But as explained above, God looked on them graciously when He changed their sorrow to another sorrow in order that they might not grieve, lest their hearts be polluted with something disliked by God; [and it proves that they had come back and repented before that].

So, these were some of the believers; they were those who felt remorse for what they had done, and returned to the Prophet gathering around him. Probably it was at the time when the Prophet separated himself from the hordes of the polytheists and reached the mountain-pass—although they returned to him gradually, one by one, when it was known that the Prophet was not slain.

The other group is referred to in the next sentence, "and (there was) another party who cared only for their own selves."

…and (there was) another party who cared only for their own selves: This was another group of the believers. The word "believer" is used here only to distinguish them from the hypocrites who have been mentioned later on [in 3:167–168]: *And that He might know the hypocrites and it was said to them: "Come, fight in Allah's way, or defend yourselves." They said: "If we knew fighting, we would certainly have followed you."* God did not give this second group (that cared only for itself) the honor accorded to the first one (who were pardoned, then given another sorrow and lastly provided security and slumber). This second party, on the other hand, was left on their own; they were wholly engrossed in their own selves, oblivious of everything else.

God mentioned here their two characteristics although one was a concomitant or a branch of the other. First, that they cared only for themselves. It does not mean that they wanted for their own selves the happiness—in its real sense. After all, even the believers want the same thing—the happiness for themselves. Not only man, every creature that has a little bit of will and volition thinks only about itself. The connotation of this clause is that their whole attention was riveted to save their own skins—lest they lose their lives and be slain. In other words, their only aim in accepting the religion—or doing any other work—was to let their own selves have the usufruct of this world. They had professed Islam only because they thought that it was an unconquerable factor, and that God would not like it to be overwhelmed by His enemies—even if

the enemies had all the factors in their favor. These people sought to gain benefits from the religion as long as it went on giving them something to their advantage. But if the situation changed and the tables were turned against them, they would turn back on their heels, retreating into disbelief.

…they entertained about Allah thoughts of ignorance quite unjustly. They say: "Do we have any hand in the affair?" Say: "Surely the affair is wholly (in the hands) of Allah: They entertained about God a thought that was incorrect, was actually a thought of ignorance. They ascribed to Him a characteristic that was not true, and was like that which the people of ignorance used to ascribe to Him. Whatever that thought, it was related to their words, "Do we have any hand in the affair?." It may also be inferred from the reply God taught His Prophet, that is, *"Say: 'Surely the affair is wholly (in the hands) of Allah.' "* This reply evidently shows that according to their thinking some affairs were in their own hands. That is why as soon as they were defeated and massacred, they started having doubts about religion, and said to each other, "Do we have any hand in the affair?"

It is clear from the above that they thought that outright victory and triumph was their right. Why? Because they were Muslims ! They believed that the true religion cannot be vanquished, and consequently the followers of that religion cannot be defeated—because, according to them, it was incumbent on God to help it unconditionally, without any restriction, because He had promised to help.

So that was the unjust thought, the thought of ignorance. The idol-worshippers of the days of ignorance believed that God was the Creator of everything; that at the same time there was a separate lord for every phenomenon, like sustenance, life, death, love, war, etc. Also, every species and every part of creation like man, earth, river, etc., had a lord of its own; each lord managed the affair of his subjects and none could overpower him within his jurisdiction. They worshipped those lords so that they would provide them with sustenance, give them happiness, and protect them from evil and misfortune; and God was like an overlord, allotting each group of His subjects and each part of His Kingdom to a lord who had full authority to do whatever he liked within his jurisdiction and in his domain.

If someone thinks that the true religion could not be over-powered in its advancement, and that the Prophet—being the first to receive it from his Lord and be responsible for it—could not be defeated in his mission or could not die or be killed, then surely such a man entertains thoughts

of ignorance about God. He has taken a partner for God, and idolized the Prophet as a deity who has been given domain over victory and war booty—while in fact God is One Who has no partner, and in Whose hand lies every power and every authority; and none else besides Him has any authority at all. That is why when God said in a preceding section, "That He may cut off a portion from among those who disbelieve, or abase them so that they should return disappointed of attaining what they desired", He cut short the speech, turning towards His Prophet to tell him, "You have no concern in the affair." He did so, lest someone thought the Prophet had any concern or authority in that cutting off a portion of unbelievers or abasing them. It is God Himself Who has established the system of cause and effect. The stronger the cause the surer the appearance of its effect, no matter whether that effect is right or wrong, virtue or vice, good or bad, guidance or misguidance, justice or injustice. Also, it make no difference whether the person involved is believer or unbeliever, beloved or hated, Muḥammad or Abū Sufyān.

Of course, God has special providence for His religion and for His friends. It is because of that concern that the system in the creation is run in such a way that it would finally lead to the victory of religion, and prepare the earth for His friends—*and the end is for the pious ones* [7:128].

It is a universal law and no exception has been made for prophethood and divine mission. That is why we find that when the normal factors and causes were present for the advancement of the religion and victory of the believers (as was the case in some battles of the Prophet), the believers triumphed; and when there was any weak link in the chain (for example, hypocrisy raised its head, or they disobeyed the Prophet, or became weak-hearted or nervous) the polytheists got the upper hand, defeating the believers. The same was true in case of other prophets, vis-a-vis, their people. The enemies were men of the world, whose only aim was to gain benefits of this life; they had overwhelming powers and gathered strength upon strength, and mobilized army after army. Naturally, they got upper hand and crushed the prophets—some were slain like Zachariah, others were beheaded like John, yet, others had to leave their place like Jesus and so on.

Nevertheless, if the truth of the religion could not be established without disturbing the normal casualty—in other words when it was a question of life or death for the truth—then it was necessary for God to strengthen the religion in an extraordinary and supernatural way, lest evidence of

its truth be destroyed. Some details of this subject were given in the discourses on Miracles[1] in volume one, and on Deeds[2] in volume three.

However, to return to our topic: When these people (who did not care except for their own selves) asked each other whether they really had any authority in the affair, it showed that they entertained doubts about the truth of the religion, and as we have explained above, their religion had the spirit of idolatry in its body. Therefore, God told His Prophet to reply them in these words: "Surely the affair is wholly (in the hands) of God." Before that He had told the Prophet himself that he had no concern, no authority, in the affair. All this made it clear that the religion of nature, the religion of monotheism, is the one in which all authority is reserved for God; the rest of the things—including the Prophet—have got no authority at all; rather they are links in the chain of cause and effect, governed by the divine system that leads to the law of test and trial.

They conceal within their souls what they would not reveal to you. They say: "Had we any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here." Say: "Had you remained in your houses, those for whom slaughter was ordained would certainly have gone forth to the places where they (now) lie;" and that Allah might test what was in your breasts and that He might purge what was in your hearts; and Allah knows what is in the breasts: It exposes their lack of belief in a much more harsher tone than their words, "Do we have any hand in the affair?", had shown. Those words had expressed their doubt in the form of a question. But the idea hidden in their hearts ("Had we any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here"), is an argument to prove according to their thinking untruth of the religion! That is why although they had dared to utter the former question before the Prophet, they kept the later words concealed in their hearts, as it would have clearly shown that they gave preponderance to disbelief over belief.

God therefore told His Prophet to reply their undisclosed thought in these words: *Say: 'Had you remained in your houses, those for whom slaughter was ordained would certainly have gone forth to the places where they (now) lie;' and that God might test what was in your breasts and that He might purge what was in your hearts*. These words made it clear to them that:

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1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 1. (Trans.)

2 *ibid.* Eng. vol. 3. (Trans.)

First: When the martyrs were slain in the battlefield, it was not because you were not on truth nor because the authority was not in your hands—as you think. Rather, it had happened because the divine decree—which is enforced without fail—had ordained that those martyrs would lie in this place. If you had remained behind, those for whom martyrdom was ordained would surely have gone ahead to the place of their martyrdom. There is no way of escaping from the appointed time of death; when it comes nobody can delay it an hour nor can he bring it on before its times.

Second: It is a divinely established system that test and purge would encompass each and every human being; it would inevitably cover one and all, you as well as them. Neither you could avoid coming out of your homes nor the battle could be put off. All this was necessary in order that the martyrs might arrive at their right positions and achieve their high ranks, and you might reach your due places. In this way, everyone would be placed in his proper place—either felicity or infelicity, happiness or unhappiness—after the testing of the thoughts and ideas hidden in your breasts, and the separation of belief and polytheism concealed in your hearts.

It is amazing to see a number of exegetes writing that the group mentioned in this verse refers to the hypocrites—when the context clearly shows that it describes the condition of some believers. As for the hypocrites (that is, the group of ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy that had withdrawn from the battle in the very beginning even before the battle had started), their condition has been described much later. Of course, that explanation might be in place if they use the word, "hypocrites", for those of weak faith, who were so confused in their belief that it ultimately boiled down to rejection of faith (in reality) although they professed Islam (in words). It is they whom God describes as 'those in whose hearts was disease'. He says: *When the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was disease said: "Their religion has deceived them*" [8:49]; *and among you there are those who hearken for their sake* [9:47]. Or may be they want to say that all hypocrites had not gone back to Medina with ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy.

Even more amazing is some others' assertion that these people were good believers. They say that these people thought that the affair of divine help and victory was in their hands because they were on the true religion, and they had seen how in the battle of Badr they were given victory and how angels were sent to help them. According to these exegetes, when they said, "Do we have any hand in the affair?", and thought, "Had we

any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here", it was actually their way of confessing that the affair was in the hands of God, not theirs, otherwise they would not have been massacred.

If we accept this interpretation then the replies (*Say: "Surely the affair is wholly [in the hands] of Allah"*, and, *Say: "Had you remained in your houses, those for whom slaughter was ordained would certainly have gone forth to the places where they [now] lie"*), would be totally irrelevant. Some people have realized this defect and then have tried to explain it away in a way that has compounded the confusion. In any case, we have already explained its true meaning to you.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ
بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا ۖ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

(3:155) ***(As for) those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met, only the Satan sought to cause them to make a slip*** **(istazallahumu al-shayṭān)** ***on account of*** **(bi)** ***some deeds they had done, and certainly Allah has pardoned them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.***

Istazallahumu al-shayṭān (the Satan wanted them to slip); he wanted so only because they had acquired some evil traits in their psyches, and done some bad deeds; one evil leads to another, because it emanates from following the heart's desires—and the heart desires only that which has some affinity to it.

Someone has taken the preposition *bi* (on account of) as indicative of instrument, and said that "some deeds" refers to their turning back on the day of fighting. But this interpretation is far fetched; because "some deeds they had done" manifestly shows that their deeds had preceded their turning back; the two cannot refer to the same thing.

In any case, the verse shows that some sins and evil deeds done by them had given the Satan power to mislead them by making them retreat and flee from the *jihād*. Consequently, there is no ground to suppose that the verse points to the Satanic cry on the day of Uḥud that the Prophet was killed (as has been narrated in some traditions), because such interpretation is not supported by the wordings of the verse in any way.

… and certainly Allah has pardoned them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing: This pardon was granted to those who turned back on the

day of battle, as mentioned in the beginning of the verse. The verse is unrestricted, and therefore covers all those who fled on that day. In other words, it includes both groups: those on whom slumber was sent down and those who cared only for their own selves. But there is a difference between the two, as the former has been honored by God, but not the latter. Because of that difference, this general pardon (which covers both groups) does not mention the aspects of honor related to the former's pardon (as mentioned earlier).

It also shows that the pardon mentioned in this verse is not the same as the one described [in 3:152] above, *and He has certainly pardoned you*. That the two pardons are different may be gathered from different tones used in the two verses. Look first at the former where God says, *and He has certainly pardoned you, and Allah is Gracious to the believers*. It clearly, shows God's grace and mercy on them, and mentions them as "believers"; thereafter it goes on saying that He changed their sorrow to another sorrow in order that they might not grieve; then tells them that He sent down security on them in the form of slumber. How different is that tone from the one employed in this verse where it merely says: *and certainly Allah has pardoned them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing*. Note that it speaks only about the pardon, but is silent about all the above mentioned aspects of honor; then it ends with the adjective, "Forbearing"—focusing the attention on the fact that God does not make haste in giving punishment. A pardon accompanied by forbearance indicates that although the Master has overlooked the sin but still He is not pleased with the sinner.

Suggestion: Those who think that both groups are equal in rank, do so because both have been granted pardon.

Reply: The former pardon is different from the latter in its connotation, although both denote pardoning. There is no proof to show that pardon, forgiveness and things like that have the same connotation everywhere; and we have explained how the two differ in these verses.

Pardon and Forgiveness in the Qur'an

What is pardon? As al-Rāghib has said (and it is the meaning derived from its various uses):

> *al-ʿAfw* (pardon) originally means to proceed straight away to get something. They say: *ʿafāh* or *iʿtafāh* (he proceeded towards him to take a certain thing from him); *ʿafati al-rīḥu al-dār* (the wind proceeded to the house taking away its traces or vestiges). They

say, ʿ*afati al-dār* when they want to say that the house has become effaced, obliterated; probably there is a fine literary point in this usage: It is as though the house itself came to cover its traces and decorations, got hold of them and disappeared from sight. It is in this meaning that *al-ʿafw* is attributed to God; as though God goes to His servant and takes away whatever sins he might be having—thus the servant is left without any sin.

It appears from the above that *al-maghfirah* (forgiveness; lit. to cover) in a way emanates from *al-ʿafw*. The sin is first taken away then it is covered up so that it cannot be seen—neither by the sinner nor by others. The Qur'an says: *and pardon us and forgive us* [2:286]; *and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving* [4:99].

Also it is clear that pardon and forgiveness—although having different meanings, the one branching out from the other, academically—are one and the same for all practical purposes. Also, these meanings are not reserved for God; these words may be used for others too in the same meanings. God says: … *unless they remit* (yaʿfūna) *or he remits* (yaʿfuwa) *in whose hand is the marriage tie* [2:237]; *Say to those who believe (that) they forgive those who do not hope the days of Allah* [45:14]; *pardon them therefore and ask forgiveness for them, and take counsel with them in the affair* [3:159]. Here God enjoins His Prophet to pardon them; he should not mete out to them the consequences of their disobedience, like censuring and admonishing them or shunning and avoiding them. He should also beseech God to forgive them (and He will grant that prayer without fail) in order that they are saved from punishment of their sins.

Also, it is clear that the theme of pardon and forgiveness may be related with creative phenomena and legislative effects, as well as with affairs of this world and the next. God says: *And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults)* [42:30]. This verse definitely includes pardon of worldly consequences of the sins and faults. The same is the apparent significance of the words of God: … *and the angels declare His glory with the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth* [42:5]. Also the words of Adam and his wife, quoted in the Qur'an, point to this reality: *They said: "Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers"* [7:23]. Certainly this injustice to their own selves and the forgiveness asked for were not related to the hereafter, because the prohibition which they had

contravened was in nature of an advice, not of a law.

Many Qur'anic verses prove that nearness and proximity to God and enjoyment of the paradise's blessings cannot take place unless and until the rust of polytheism and sins are removed by repentance, etc., followed by the divine forgiveness. For example, God says: *Nay! rather, what they used to do has become (like) rust upon their hearts* [84:14]; *and whoever believes in God, He guides aright his heart* [64:11].

Pardon and forgiveness are, in short, like removal of impediments and eradication of contrary antagonistic factors. God has counted belief and the hereafter as "life"; and the effects of belief, the deeds of the people of the hereafter and their lively progress as "light." He says: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* [6:122]; *and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life* [29:64]. Thus, polytheism is death, and sins are utter darkness. God says: *Or like utter darkness in the deep sea: there covers it a wave above which is another wave, above which is a cloud, (layers of) utter darkness one above another; when he holds out his hand, he is almost unable to see it; and to whomsoever Allah does not give light, he has no light* [24:40]. Forgiveness then removes the death and darkness; it takes shape through the life (that is, belief) and the light (that is, divine mercy).

An unbeliever has neither life nor light. A believer whose sins are forgiven, has the life and the light both; on the other hand, a believer who is encumbered with sins is alive but with diminished light; his light will become perfect when he is forgiven. God says: *their light shall run on before them and on their right hands; they shall say: "Our Lord! make perfect for us our light and grant us forgiveness* [66:8].

The above discourse makes it clear that when pardon and forgiveness is attributed to God regarding creative affairs then it means removal of impediment (by creating a factor to erase it); in the context of legislative matters, it indicates removal of such factors that would prevent man's success in the hereafter; while in the circle of happiness and unhappiness it would entail removal of those things that would impede his happiness.

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Verses 156-164

It is the continuation of the verses revealed especially about the battle of Uḥud. It deals with another affair affecting them, that is, the grief and sorrow that had overwhelmed them because so many of their braves and notables had been slaughtered. The overwhelming majority of the martyrs was from the Helpers; as reportedly no more than four of the Emigrants were martyred. It gives rise to the surmise that most of the resistance was from the Helpers' side and that the Emigrants had left the battleground long before them.

In short, these verses explain the error and mistake in sorrowing and grieving; then turn to another matter resulting from that grief, that is, their critical attitude towards the Messenger of God, thinking that it was he who had brought them to that disaster and put them into that perdition. It may be inferred from their talk alluded to herein: *Had they been with us, they would not have died and they would not have been slain*. In other words, if they had listened to them and not obeyed the Messenger of God they would have been alive today. It means that it was he who had led them to the slaughter. The verses make it clear that it was not meet for the Prophet that he should deceive anyone; he is God's Messenger, noble of heart, sublime in character; he is lenient to them by the mercy of God, pardons them and seeks God's forgiveness for them and takes their counsel by permission of God; and God has conferred His favor on them by sending him to them in order that he may take them out of error bringing them to the guidance.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُزًّى لَوْ كَانُوا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوا وَمَا قُتِلُوا لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَٰلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾

(3:156) ***O you who believe! be not like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren when they travel in the earth or engage in fighting: "Had they been with us, they would not have died and they***

would not have been slain;" so Allah makes this to be an intense regret in their hearts; and Allah gives life and causes death; and Allah sees what you do.

The clause, *those who disbelieve*, refers to the unbelievers—not to the hypocrites, as some people think. It is not the hypocrisy, per se, which incites such talks—although the hypocrites had uttered these words. Such talk, in reality, is a product of disbelief. Thus it was necessary to ascribe it to the unbelievers. *al-Ḍarb fi al-arḍ* (lit., striking in the earth) metaphorically means travelling. *al-Ghuzzā* is plural of *al-ghāzī* (fighter) like *al-ṭālib* and *al-ṭullāb* or *al-ḍārib* and *al-ḍurrāb*.

… so Allah makes this to be an intense regret in their hearts: That is, so that God may punish them through this intense regret; it has thus put the means in place of the end. The words, *Allah gives life and causes death*, explain the reality about which the unbelievers had gone astray, and had said, "Had they been with us, they would not have died and they would not have been slain." The words, "death", as used here, covers natural death as well as slaughter—we have explained earlier that when used alone, this word covers every type of death. The clause, *and Allah sees what you do*, explains the reason for the prohibition contained in the words, "be not like those who disbelieve."

In the clause, "they would not have died and they would not have been slain", death is mentioned before slaying; the sequence follows that of the preceding clause, "when they travel … or engage in fighting." Also, unlike slaying (which is an abnormal happening) death is a natural and normal phenomenon; therefore the normal was mentioned before the abnormal.

The verse, in short, admonishes the believers not to be like the unbelievers; they should not say about someone who dies outside his home town or among strangers, or is slain when engaged in jihād, that if he had been with them he would not have died or been killed. This type of talk throws one into mental agony and divine punishment—it is the intense grief put in their hearts. Moreover, it emanates from sheer ignorance: Being near them or away from them neither gives life nor causes death. Giving life and death is among the affairs exclusively reserved for God—the One Who has no partner or colleague. Therefore, the believers should fear God and not be like the unbelievers; and God sees what they do.

وَلَئِنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا

يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَلَئِنْ مُتُّمْ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

(3:157-158) ***And if you are slain in the way of Allah or you die, certainly forgiveness from Allah and mercy is better than what they amass. And if indeed you die or you are slain, certainly to Allah shall you be gathered together.***

Obviously, "what they amass", refers to property and wealth as well as to its concomitants, as these are the best objects of desire in this life.

This verse mentions martyrdom before normal death, because being slain in the way of God is nearer to divine forgiveness compared to other deaths. This fine point has caused this change of sequence. Thereafter, the next verse, "And if indeed you die or you are slain", reverts to the normal pattern, putting death before slaughter, because there is no such fine point there to justify any change.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

(3:159-160) ***Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you are lenient to them, and had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask forgiveness for them, and take counsel with them in the affair, but when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust (in him). If Allah assists you, then there is none that can overcome you, and if He forsakes you, who is there then that can assist you after Him? And on Allah should the believers rely.***

al-Faẓẓ (rude, rough; hard-heartedness) metaphorically means unkindness, ill-nature and intolerance; *al-infiḍāḍ* means to disperse.

The verse turns away from the believers, addressing the Messenger of God directly, although the real import is as follows: It is due to Our

mercy that Our Messenger is lenient to you; that is why We have ordered him to pardon you, ask forgiveness for you and take counsel with you in the affair, and to place his trust in Us when he has taken any decision.

Despite that meaning, the mode of address was changed (and we have explained this reason in the beginning of this topic of Uḥud) because there is a current of censure, admonition and stricture running throughout the narrative, and the Qur'an turns its face from the believers whenever an opportunity occurs. This situation is one of them, because it touches a condition of theirs which tends to put blame on the Prophet. Their grieving for the slaughter of their martyrs might sometimes lead them to find fault with the Prophet's actions and to accuse him of bringing them to the hazardous eventuality where they were killed and extirpated. That is why God turned away from them and addressed His Prophet directly: *Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you are lenient to them …*

This talk is based on another implied one which may be understood from the context: "If they are entangled, as you see, in such undesirable condition that they resemble the unbelievers and intensely grieve for their martyrs, then it is only due to Our mercy that you are lenient to them; otherwise, they would have dispersed from around you." (And God knows better.)

The clauses, "pardon them therefore and ask forgiveness for them, and take counsel with them in the affair", endorse the precedent established by the Prophet, as he was doing all this from the beginning, and he had taken their counsel shortly before the battle of Uḥud. The verse points to the fact that the Prophet does what he is told by God to do, and God is pleased with his performance.

God told His Prophet to pardon them (that is, he should not mete out to them the consequences of their disobedience), and to ask God to forgive them (and in that case He would certainly do so). The word, although general and unrestricted, does not include the shariah's penal code and things like that; otherwise it would result in discarding the whole Shariah. Moreover, the next clause, "and take counsel with them in the affair", implies that the preceding two orders too are related to the matters of government and public affairs—in which he is required to take counsel with them.

Now we have reached the last sentences: ***but when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah, surely Allah loves those who trust (in Him):*** When He loves [you], He will be your Guardian and Helper; and will

never forsake you. The next verse [3:160] makes it clear and even invites the believers to have trust in Him: *If Allah assists you, then there is none that can overcome you, and if He forsakes you, who is there then that can assist you after Him?* Then He orders the believers to have trust in Him and says: "and on God should the believers rely." The sentence metaphorically puts the effect in place of the cause. They should rely on God because they believe in Him, and there is no helper or supporter except Him.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَغُلَّ ۚ وَمَنْ يَغْلُلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ أَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمَنْ بَاءَ
بِسَخَطٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾ هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ
وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

(3:161-163) ***And it is not attributable to a prophet that he should defraud; and he who defrauds shall bring (with him) that which he has defrauded, on the Day of Resurrection; then shall every soul be paid back fully what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who has brought upon himself the wrath from Allah, and whose abode is hell? And it is an evil destination. They are of (diverse) grades with Allah, and Allah sees what they do.***

al-Ghill means to defraud, to act faithlessly. We have mentioned in verse 3:79 (*It is not meet for a man that God should give him the Book and the wisdom and prophethood, then he should say to men: "Be my servants rather than God's"*) that this mode of speech is intended to declare the purity and blamelessness of the Prophet showing that he was far removed from evil and indecency. This verse means as follows: Far be it from a prophet to defraud or be faithless to his Lord or the people (and defrauding the people too is another form of defrauding God); it is because he who defrauds will have to meet his Lord with that which he has defrauded and shall be paid back fully what he has earned.

Then He declares that accusing the Prophet of defrauding is an unjust and untenable idea, because he follows the pleasure of God, he never goes beyond His pleasure; and the man who defrauds, brings upon himself severe wrath of God and his abode is the hell, and it is an evil destination. The verse, *Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah*, gives the above

connotation.

Then He says that the various groups (that is, those who follow the pleasure of God and those who bring wrath of God upon themselves) are of diverse grades; and God sees what they do. The people should not think that God loses sight of even an iota of good or evil done by them; they should not be careless in following His pleasure or avoiding His wrath.

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾

(3:164) ***Certainly Allah conferred (His) favor upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His signs and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.***

Again the mode of address has changed, taking the believers as absent. The general reason of such changes has already been explained. As for this particular verse, the reason is as follows: The verse intends to describe God's favor upon the believers—because of their belief. That is why it has used the adjective, "the believers", and not the verb, "those who believe", because only an adjective shows inseparable relationship, and only the adjective could show the causality (as has been said) or could show it more perfectly. The verse's meaning is clear.

There are other matters worth explaining in this verse; and, God willing, some will be given in appropriate places.

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Verses 165-171

It is the conclusion of the verses about the battle of Uḥud. These verses describe the position of some hypocrites who had deserted the believers when they were proceeding from Medina to Uḥud, and refute what they were saying about those who were slain in the way of God; then the verses extol the condition of the martyrs saying that they were enjoying God's bounties in His presence and were happily waiting for their brothers who were left behind in this world.

أَوَلَمَّا أَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُمْ مِثْلَيْهَا قُلْتُمْ أَنَّىٰ هَٰذَا ۖ قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

(3:165) ***What! when a misfortune befell you while you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much, you began to say: "Whence is this?" Say: "It is from your own selves; surely Allah has power over all things."***

First they were told not to be like the unbelievers—grieving and feeling intense sorrow for their slain brethren. It was explained to them that life and death were exclusively in the hands of God, they had no concern in this affair; and it would have made no difference whether the martyrs were near them or far from them, or whether they had gone forth to fight or remained behind. After making all this clear, now God explains the immediate cause of that disaster according to the law of causality. He tells them that debacle was caused by their disobedience which they committed on that day: the disobedience of the archers when they left their position, and then the disobedience of all those who fled away from the battlefield. In short, the disaster took place because they disobeyed the Messenger, their Commander, and showed lack of courage and disputed among themselves. All this led to their retreat according to the law of nature and custom.

The verse's meaning is therefore as follows: Do you know how this misfortune befell you? Was it not a misfortune that you had previously inflicted twice as much on your enemies, the unbelievers? This time the

disaster was brought on you by your own selves. It were you who undermined the means of victory with your own hands; it were you who did not follow the clear order of your Commander, fell into temptation and disputed one with the other.

The clause, "while you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much", prompts them to compare their losses in Uḥud (martyrdom of seventy believers) with those suffered by the unbelievers in Badr when they had suffered twice as many casualties—as seventy of the unbelievers were slain and seventy taken prisoners.

This description is intended to soothe the believers' feelings, making the calamity look less devastating. After all, they have suffered only half of that which they had inflicted on their enemies; so they should not grieve, should not be distressed.

Some people have explained it differently. According to them the clause, "It is from your own selves", means that you yourselves had opted for this misfortune. It happened like this: They had chosen to release the prisoners of Badr in exchange for ransom. But the initial order was to kill them; and they were warned that if they accepted the ransom, a similar number from their side would be killed next year; but they said: "We agree to this condition. We shall take the ransom and enjoy its benefits; and if one of us is killed later on, he shall be a martyr."

The ending clause of this verse (*surely Allah has power over all things*) supports, or rather proves, this latter explanation; as this clause does not connect properly with the former meaning. We shall quote in the next "Traditions" a hadith from the Imāms of the Ahl al-bayt regarding this topic.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾
وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا ۚ وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا قَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوِ ادْفَعُوا ۖ
قَالُوا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ ۗ هُمْ لِلْكُفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ
لِلْإِيمَانِ ۚ يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾

(3:166-167) ***And what befell you on the day when the two armies met* (at Uḥud) *was with Allah's permission, and that He might know the believers, And that He might know the hypocrites; and it***

was said to them: "Come, fight in Allah's way, or (at least) defend yourselves." They said: "If we knew fighting, we would certainly have followed you." They were on that day much nearer to unbelief than to belief. They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts; and Allah best knows what they conceal.

The first of these two verses supports the above theme that the clause, "Say: 'It is from you own selves' ", refers to their opting for the ransom in exchange of Badr's prisoners and agreeing to the attached condition. Only in this way, it can be said that the misfortune that befell them in Uḥud was with God's permission. As for the former explanation, (that the immediate cause of this misfortune was your disobedience), it has no relevance with this verse; obviously, there is no sense in saying that their disobedience was by the permission of God.

Accordingly, the statement that the misfortune that had befallen them was by God's permission, explains the preceding declaration that it was from their own selves. It paves the way of the next clause, "and that He might know the believers", which in its turn opens the way to deal with the hypocrites, together with their talk and its refutation; and to unveil the reality of this special death, that is, martyrdom in the way of God.

The clause, "or (at least) defend yourselves", intends to persuade them to fight; if you do not fight in the way of God, then at least defend your families and your own selves. "They were on that day much nearer to unbelief than to belief" The preposition *li* in *li al-kufr* (to unbelief) and *li al-īmān* (to belief) has been used in meaning of "to." It shows their position vis-a-vis open disbelief; as for hypocrisy, they had certainly fallen in it.

The word, "with their mouths", in the sentence, "They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts", has been put here for emphasis and as a counter-balance to the clause, "in their hearts."

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا ۗ قُلْ فَادْرَءُوا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

(3:168) ***Those who said of their brethren whilst they (themselves) held back: "Had they obeyed us, they would not have been killed." Say. "Then ward off death from yourselves if you are truthful."***

The word, "brethren" refers to those with whom they had family ties from among the martyrs. God has mentioned here their "brotherhood",

side by side with the comment, "while they (themselves) held back"; it is meant to put them to shame in a most vivid and crushing way, showing that they held back from helping their own brothers who were meanwhile massacred by the enemy. The sentence, "Say: 'Then ward off death from yourselves' ", refutes their talk. *al-Dar'* means to ward off; to avert.

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

(3:169) ***And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord.***

Again the speaker turns away from the Muslims and speaks with the Prophet alone; and its reason has been mentioned several times in Commentaries of the relevant verses.

Also, it is possible to treat this address as continuation of the preceding sentence where it addresses the Prophet, "Say: 'Then ward off death' "

Death in this verse means nullity of consciousness and action. That is why God explains the martyrs' life by showing that they receive sustenance (and it is action) and rejoice in God's grace (and it shows their feeling which proves consciousness).

فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

(3:170) ***Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.***

al-Faraḥ (joy) is opposite of *al-ḥuzn* (sorrow). *al-Bishārah* and *al-bushrā* (means, good news); *al-istibshār* (means, to seek happiness through a good news). The verse means: They rejoice in what they have received of God's grace and which is always present with them; they feel happy when they receive the good tidings regarding those who have not yet joined them—are still in this world—that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.

Two things are clear from the above:

First: Those who are killed in the way of God continue to receive the news about good believers whom they had left behind [alive] in this world.

Second: The good news concerns the reward of the believers' deeds that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. It happens that they see this reward in the abode which they abide in. It is because their knowledge of things emanates from observation, not from arguments.

The verse therefore proves that after death man's existence continues between his death and the Day of Resurrection. We have described it in detail under "The Life of *al-Barzakh*" under the verse, *And do not speak of those who are slain in God's way as dead* [2:154].[1]

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾

(3:171) *They rejoice on account of favor from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers.*

This rejoicing is more comprehensive and covers their joy for others as well as for themselves. It is proved from the clause, "and that God will not waste the reward of the believers", which being unrestricted covers all the believers. Perhaps this is the reason why the "rejoicing"—and also "grace"—have been repeated here. Meditate on this verse.

The words, "favor" and "grace", have been used as common nouns, and "sustenance" has been left unspecified. This style gives the hearer's imagination full rein; he is free to visualize whatever he likes. Likewise fear and grief are left vague, so that put in negative form they would signify comprehensiveness.

One finds on meditating on the verse that:

First: The verses intend to describe the believers' reward.

Second: That reward consists of their sustenance near God.

Third: That sustenance is a favor and grace from God.

Fourth: That favor and grace is mirrored in the fact that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.

The clause, *that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve* [in 3:170], is really wonderful; the more you meditate on it, the more expansive and extensive its meaning will be, with its subtlety, sublimity and graceful flow. The thing that comes before the eyes is that the fear and sorrow are removed from the martyrs. Fear takes shape when there is possibility of

1 See *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 2. (Trans.)

something occurring which would nullify an existing happiness of man; sorrow appears when that thing has already happened. Misfortune—or any undesirable phenomenon—is feared as long as it has not befallen; but once it has begun, the fear gives way to sorrow. There is no fear after a misfortune has taken shape, and no sorrow before that.

Fear—with all its aspects—may be removed from man only when there is no chance of deterioration or extinction for any bounty that he enjoys and possesses. Sorrow—with all its aspects—may be removed from him only when he is not deprived of any such bounty to begin with, nor has he lost it after finding it. When the Qur'an says that God has removed general fear and general sorrow from a man, it means that He has given him all possible bounties and favors for his enjoyment; and those bounties and favors will never deteriorate or be taken away from him. In other words, man will remain alive forever enjoying the everlasting happiness.

It is evident that removal of fear and sorrow means the same as man's receiving sustenance from God; He says: *and that which is with Allah is best for the righteous* [3:198]; *and what is with Allah is enduring* [16:96]. These two verses show that what is with God is everlasting and enduring bounty, not tainted by any affliction, not liable to extinction.

Also, it is clear that negation of fear and sorrow is one with affirmation of favor and grace, that is, divine bounty. But we have explained in the beginning of the book (and further details will be given under the verse 4:69, *… with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favors*) that "favor", whenever used in the Qur'an, means divine guardianship. Therefore, this verse means that God is their Guardian Who manages their affairs and bestows on them exclusive grace.

Some people have supposed that "grace" means a bounty given in excess of what a man's deeds have made him eligible to; and "favor" means the bounty equal to the deeds. But it does not enmesh with the end clause, "and that God will not waste the reward of the believers." The word, "reward", shows that they are "eligible" for grace and favor both; and you have seen that all these clauses, *are provided sustenance from their Lord*, *Rejoicing in what Allah has given*, *They rejoice on account of favor from Allah and (His) grace*, *… and Allah will not waste the reward of the believers*, lead to one and the same reality.

There are other aspects of these verses, some of which were explained under the verse, *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead* [2:154]; hopefully God will help us to complete, according to our capacity, other related matters in other appropriate places, God willing.

Verses 172-175

These verses have connection with those revealed about the battle of Uḥud, as may be understood from the clause, "after the wound had afflicted them", when read in conjunction with the preceding words, "If a wound has afflicted you (at Uḥud), a wound like it has also afflicted the (unbelieving) people."

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٢﴾

(3:172) ***(As for) those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger (even) after the wound had afflicted them, those among them who do good (to others) and guard (against evil) shall have a great reward.***

al-Istijābah and *al-ijābah* both reportedly have the same meaning: You ask for something and get positive response.

Both God and His Messenger have been mentioned here, although either word would have sufficed. Perhaps it is because the Muslims in Uḥud disobeyed both God and the Prophet. They disobeyed God by fleeing and retreating from the battlefield, while God had ordered them to fight and they were forbidden to flee. They disobeyed the Prophet when the archers violated his order not to leave their post in any case, and when the rest of the Muslims ran off precipitately and did not respond to his call although he was calling them from their rear. Now that they did respond positively on this later occasion, they were described as responding to God and the Messenger both, to set the matter in parallel.

The clause, "those among them who do good (to others) and guard (against evil) shall have a great reward", restricts the promise to only a group among those who had responded. It is because the response is an external action which does not necessarily spring from the reality of doing good and guarding against evil—on which the great reward depends. It is an amazing watchfulness of the Qur'an that one topic does not distract it from other realities. It is evident from above that not all of the responders

were sincere to God in this matter; some of them were not true doers of good to others nor did they sincerely guard themselves against evil—and these are the important characteristics which make one eligible for great reward from God.

Some people have said that *min* (from, among) in *minhum* (among them), is not here to indicate a portion; rather it is explanatory, in the same way as it is in verse 48:29, where it says: *Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are severe against the unbelievers … Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward.* But it is an interpretation which does not agree with the context.

Also, it is clear that their praise contained in later verses, "Those to whom the people said …", is intended for a selected band of them although in wordings it is attributed to the whole group.

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ
إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ
لَمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾

(3:173-174) ***Those to whom the people said: "Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them"; but this (only) increased their faith, and they said: "Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent Protector is (He)." So they returned with favor from Allah and (His) grace; no evil touched them and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.***

al-Nās (people, men) is used for human beings when no distinguishing factor (to separate one from another) is taken into account. The first *al-nās* (translated here as "people") is different from the second (translated as "men"); the latter refers to the enemy that was gathering army to fight the believers, while the former were those who had forsaken the believers in Uḥud and held back from them and were now talking with them in this way to keep them back, so that they (the believers) would not proceed forth to fight the polytheists. In other words, the latter refers to the polytheists and the former to their agents within the Muslim camp who insidiously worked against the believers. The verse manifestly shows that they were a group not one person. It supports the report that the verses were revealed not about the events of the Lesser Badr, but about the

Prophet's campaign when, after Uḥud, he went forth with the remnants of his companions in pursuit of the polytheists. Both events will be narrated in the coming "Traditions."

Surely men have gathered against you: That is, they have gathered to attack you again. (And God knows better.)

… but this (only) increased their faith: It is but natural that when a man intends to do something, and someone whom he does not trust advises him not to do it, then that prohibition gives an impetus to do it by all means; his powers and faculties become geared to do that work, and his intention becomes firmer. The more the said advisor persists in prohibition, the more determined the man becomes to do it. This effect is even more stronger when the man so advised believes that he is on right and that he must do what his duty requires him to do. That is why whenever someone blamed the believers regarding some divine orders or put hindrance in their way, their belief increased even more and their determination and courage became much more stronger.

Possibly one factor that helped to increase their faith is confirmation of the revealed information they had in advance that they would have to suffer trouble, harm and damage in the divine cause until their affairs would be favorably settled by God's permission. God had promised to help them, and naturally that type of help presupposes fighting and war.

… and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent Protector is (He): *Ḥasbunā* (sufficient for us) is a word derived from *al-ḥisāb* (to count, to reckon), because sufficiency is reckoned, vis-a-vis, the need. The sentence portrays their total dependence on God, because of their faith without caring about external causes which the divine system has created in the world. *al-Wakīl* (agent, manager, representative) refers to one who manages the affairs on behalf of someone. The connotation of the verse is therefore similar to that of the verse 65:3: *and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely Allah attains His purpose*. That is why this clause (*and they said: "Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent Protector is [He]"*) has been followed by the words, *So they returned with favor from Allah and (His) grace; no evil touched them*. Therefore, when they followed His pleasure, He praised them in these words, *and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.*

Trust in God

The fact is that fulfilment of desire and success of design in this material

world depends on some material and other psychological causes. When man intends to do something and produces its necessary material causes, then the only thing that can prevent his realization of his wishes is some shortcoming in its psychological causes, in his mental attitude; like weakness of will-power, fear or sorrow, recklessness or covetousness, foolishness or distrust, and things like that—and they are important and common factors. But when a man relies on God, he is connected to the unconquerable cause that can never fail—the cause above all the causes. This connection strengthens his will to such an extent that no adverse psychological cause can overpower it—and it spells success and triumph.

There is another aspect to the trust in God which in effect joins it to super-natural miraculous phenomena, as is evident from the words of God: *and whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him; surely Allah attains His purpose* [65:3]. Some aspects of this subject have already been described under the topic of "Miracle."[1]

إِنَّمَا ذَٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾

(3:175) ***That is only the Satan that frightens his friends; so do not fear them; and fear Me if you are believers.***

Evidently the demonstrative pronoun *dhālikum* (that) refers to the people who had brought the quoted news. It is therefore one of the occasions where the Qur'an has used the word, "Satan", for man; as is apparent also from the verses: *from the evil of the whispering of the slinking (Satan), who whispers into the hearts of men, from among the jinn and the men* [114:4–6]. This explanation is supported by the next sentence, "so do not fear them", that is, do not fear the people who have spoken to you in that manner, because they are only Satans. (We shall later on explain this matter, unveiling the reality behind it, if God so wills.)

Examining Narrations

Innumerable traditions have been narrated concerning the battle of Uḥud; but there is so much contradiction and conflict among them—about various aspects of the event—that it is difficult to trust all of them.

1 See *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol 1. (Trans.)

The most glaring contradictions are seen in those traditions which try to explain the reasons of revelation of most of the verses (there are nearly sixty verses in all). One is amazed to look at those traditions; a contemplating reader finds himself bound to decide that various sectarian inclinations have filled them with their own spirits—making them to speak what would benefit narrators in their sectarian causes. That is why we have not quoted them in this discourse; whoever is interested, should consult various collections of traditions and bigger books of exegesis.

(1) Ibn Abī Ḥāim narrates from Abu al-Ḍuḥā that he said: "The verse was revealed: *and take* (al-shuhadāʾ) *witnesses from among you* [3:140]; so seventy of them were martyred on that day: four from the Emigrants—Ḥamzah b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Muṣʿab b. ʿUmayr (from Banū ʿAbd al-Dār), al-Shammās b. ʿUthmān al-Makhzūmī and ʿAbdullāh b. Jaḥsh al-Asadī—and the rest were from the Helpers." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: The tradition shows that ʿAbu al-Ḍuḥā has taken the word *al-shuhadāʾ* for 'martyrs'; and an overwhelming majority of the exegetes has followed suit. But we have explained in the relevant Commentary that apparently no proof can be found in the Book for this meaning; evidently the word refers to the witnesses of the deeds.

(2) al-Ṣādiq said about the words of God, *Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you …*[3:142]: "Certainly God did know what He was going to create before He created it, when they were tiny particles; (likewise) He knew who would strive and who would not, as He knew that He would give death to His creatures (even) before He caused their death—while their death was not yet seen, (and) they were still alive." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: The tradition points to what has been explained earlier that there is a difference between knowledge before creation and the factual knowledge which is the same as the action. When this verse says, God has not yet known those who strive …, it does not speak about the knowledge before creation.

(3) al-Ṣādiq said about the words of God, *And certainly you desired death before you met it, so indeed you have seen it (even) while you look (at it)* [3:143]: "When God, the High, informed the believers what (favor) He had done to their martyrs of Badr in their abodes in the Garden, they coveted that (honor), and said: 'O God, show

us [that is provide for us] a fighting in which we should be martyred.' Therefore God showed it to them on the day of Uḥud; but they did not remain firm except him whom God wished among them. So this is the word of God, *And certainly you desired death …*" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

Author's comments: This meaning has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, Qatādah, al-Ḥasan and al-Suddī.

(4) The Imām said: "Surely the Messenger of God was wounded on the day of Uḥud, and observers saw him in that condition; then they started telling whomever they met, 'Certainly the Messenger of God has been killed; (look for) safety.' So when they returned to Medina, God revealed: *And Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you then turn back upon your heels?* (He means: to the disbelief?) *And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least.*" [3:144]. (*ibid.*)

(5) Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have narrated from al-Rabīʿ about the above verse; "It was on the day of Uḥud when they were afflicted with what afflicted them of slaughter and injury, and they talked among themselves about the Prophet of God; they said: 'He has been killed.' Others among them said: 'Had he been a prophet he would not have been killed.' But some high-ranking Companions of the Prophet said: 'Fight for what your Prophet had fought for, until God gives you victory or you join him (after martyrdom).' And we have been told that an Emigrant passed by a Helper who was struggling in his blood, and said: 'O so-and-so! do you know that Muḥammad has been killed?' The Helper said: 'If Muḥammad has been killed, then surely he had (already) conveyed (the divine message); so fight in the cause of your religion.' Then God revealed: *And Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you then turn back upon your heels?* He means: Will you then turn back to disbelief after believing?" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(6) Ibn Jarīr has narrated from al-Suddī that he said: "(A rumor) spread among the people on the day of Uḥud that the Messenger of God was killed. Then some Companions of the rock [that is the

people who had fled on the mountains] said: 'Would that we had a messenger to ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy so that he could obtain protection for us from Abū Sufyān. O people! Muḥammad has been killed; so return back to your people [to polytheism], before they come to you and kill you.' [Hearing this] Anas b. al-Naḍr said: 'O people! If Muḥammad has been killed, the Lord of Muḥammad has not been killed. Fight therefore for what Muḥammad had fought for. O God ! I apologize to Thee from what these people say, and disavow before Thee what they have brought.' [Saying this] he drew his sword and fought until he was martyred. Then God revealed: *And Muḥammad is no more then a Messenger …*" (*ibid*.)

Author's comments: This theme has been narrated through numerous other chains of narrators.

(7) al-Bāqir said: "Surely ʿAlī was afflicted with sixty wounds. The Prophet told Umm Salīm and Umm ʿAṭiyyah to treat him. They said: 'No sooner do we dress him [his wounds] in one place than another place is torn apart; and we are afraid about him [his life].' Then the Messenger of God entered, and the Muslims were visiting him (ʿAlī)—and he [his body] was one [big] wound. [The Prophet] started wiping him [ʿAlī's body] with his hand; and was saying: 'Certainly a man who met this [much affliction] in [the way of] God, has proved himself brave and is absolved [from every blame].' And no sooner did the Messenger of God touch a wound then it was healed. Then ʿAlī said: 'Praise be to God as I did not flee and did not turn [my] back.' So God thanked him for it in two places in the Qur'an; and it is His word, *and Allah will reward the grateful*, and, *We will reward the grateful.*" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: It means that God thanked ʿAlī's steadfastness and firmness, not his words, 'Praise be to God.'

(8) al-Ṣādiq recited, "And how many a prophet has fought with whom were myriads of Godly men", and said: "Thousands and thousands." Then he said: "Yes, by God, they were martyred." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: This recitation and meaning has been reported in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn Masʿūd and others; and it has been narrated that Ibn ʿAbbās was asked about this word and he said: "gatherings."

(9) ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have narrated from Mujāhid

that he said about the words of God, *after He had shown you that which you loved*: "God helped the believers against the polytheists until the women of the polytheists rode every spirited and feeble [camel]. After that the polytheists were let to triumph over them because of their (the Muslims') disobedience of the Prophet." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(10) Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Rāhwayh, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Bayhaqī (in his *Dalāʾil al-nubūwwah*) have narrated from al-Zubayr that he said: "You would have seen me with the Messenger of God; when the fear overwhelmed us, God sent sleep on us; then there was not a man among us but his chin was on his breast. Then, by God, I was hearing the talk of Muʿtab b. Qushayr—and I heard it as if it were in a dream—'Had we any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here.' So I remembered it from him; and it was about it that God revealed: *Then after sorrow He sent down security upon you, a slumber coming upon a party of you*, … we would not have been slain here, because of the talk of Muʿtab b. Qushayr." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: This information has been narrated from al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām through numerous chains of narrators.

(11) Ibn Mandah has narrated in, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, from Ibn ʿAbbās that the verse, *(As for) those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met*, was revealed about ʿUthmān, Rāfiʿ b. al-Muʿallā and Ḥārithah b. Zayd. (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: Nearly similar traditions have been narrated through several chains from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, ʿIkrimah and Ibn Isḥāq. In some of them the names of Abū Ḥudhayfah b. ʿAqabah, al-Walīd b. ʿAqabah, Saʿd b. ʿUthmān and ʿAqabah b. ʿUthmān, have been added.

In any case, the names of ʿUthmān and others have been mentioned in these traditions as examples only. Otherwise, the verse covers all those Companions who had fled away and disobeyed the Messenger of God. Of course, there is a reason why ʿUthmān has especially been mentioned in the traditions: He and those who fled with him continued running away until they reached al-Jalʿab (a mountain in the region of Medina near al-Aghwaṣ), and they remained there for three days; then they came back to the Messenger of God, who said to them: "You had indeed gone very far in it!"

As for the Companions of the Prophet in general, there are numerous

traditions that all of them had fled; and there was none left with the Messenger of God except two persons from the Emigrants and seven from the Helpers; then the polytheists attacked the Messenger of God and all the Helpers, one after the other, gave their lives defending the Prophet; none of them survived.

It has been variously reported that eleven persons remained with the Prophet, or eighteen or even thirty—but this tradition is the weakest of all.

Perhaps, this difference emanates from different information reaching the narrators, or for some other reasons. The traditions which describe how Nasībah al-Māziniyyah defended the Messenger of God prove that at that particular time nobody was with the Prophet and that those who had remained steadfast—had not fled away—were busy in fighting the polytheists. The only person who, the traditions unanimously say, had not fled was ʿAlī; and probably Abū Dujānah al-Anṣārī, Simāk b. Kharashah also comes into this category; but he fought with the sword of the Messenger of God, thereafter when the Companions left the Prophet alone, Abū Dujānah continued shielding him with his own body, deflecting the arrows from him with his shield until he fell down seriously wounded. May God be pleased with him.

As for the rest of the Companions, some returned to the Prophet when they recognized him and realized that he was not killed; some others came back after sometime. It were these returning Companions on whom God had sent the slumber. However, God pardoned all of them. You have seen in the preceding Commentary what pardon means. Some exegetes have said that pardon in this verse means that God diverted the polytheists from them, so that they (the polytheists) did not exterminate them (the Muslims) completely.

(12) Ibn ʿAdiyy and al-Bayhaqī (in his *Shuʿab al-īmān*) have narrated through good chain from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: "When the verse (*and take counsel with them in the affair*) was revealed, the Messenger of God said: 'As for God and His Messenger, they are in no need of it [counsel]; but God has made it a mercy for my *ummah*; therefore whoever among them shall consult [others] will not be deprived of guidance, and whoever leaves it will not avoid misguidance.' " (*ibid.*)

(13) al-Ṭabarānī has narrated in his *al-Awsaṭ*, from Anas that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'He who asks (God) for good, does not go wrong; and he who takes counsel does not regret.' " (*ibid.*)

(14) "He who proceeds independently in his opinion is destroyed, and he who seeks advice of men becomes partner in their wisdom." (*Nahj al-balāghah*)

(15) "To seek advice is the guidance itself; and he who proceeds independently with his opinion incurs the danger." (*ibid.*)

(16) The Prophet said: "There is no solitude more dreary than pride; and no support stronger than consultation." (*al-Tafsīr* al-Ṣāfī)

Author's comments: There are numerous traditions about consultation. The consultation is valid in those matters where one has the choice of doing or not doing a thing as would seem more preferable. As far as the definite divine rules and laws are concerned, there is no question of consultation about them, as no one has got any authority to change them. Otherwise, it would be as though current events and new trends would abrogate the words of God!

(17) al-Ṣādiq said: "People's pleasure cannot be controlled, and their tongue cannot be restrained. Did not they accuse him [that is, the Prophet] on the day of Badr that he had taken for himself a red velvet from the war booty? Until God informed him of [the whereabouts of] the velvet and absolved His Prophet from [embezzlement and] faithlessness; and revealed in His Book: *And it is not attributable to a prophet that he should defraud*" (*al-Majālis*)

Author's comments: al-Qummī has reported it in his, *al-Tafsīr*; and there it says: "Then a man came to the Messenger of God and said: 'Surely so-and-so has fraudulently taken a red velvet and has buried it in that place.' So the Messenger of God ordered to dig that place; and the velvet was discovered."

This and nearly similar meanings have been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* through numerous chains. Perhaps when the traditions say that this verse was revealed about that event, they mean that it points to that; otherwise, as we have already explained, the context shows that it was revealed after the battle of Uhud.

(18) al-Bāqir said: "He who defrauds something, will see it on the Day of Resurrection in the Fire; then he will be charged to enter therein and take it out of the Fire." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

Author's comments: It is a fine inference from the words of God: "and he who defrauds shall bring (with him) that which he has defrauded."

(19) al-Ṣādiq said about the words of God, *They are of (diverse) grades*

with God: "Those who follow the pleasure of God are the Imams, and they are, by God, of grades with God for the believers; and through their love and devotion to us, God increases their deeds for them, and God enhances (their) high grades for them; and those who have brought upon themselves the wrath from God are those who rejected the right of ʿAlī and the right of the Imāms from us, Ahl al-bayt; so in this way they brought upon themselves God's wrath." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: It is based on the 'flow' of the Qur'an, and applies the verse to its most prominent example.

(20) al-Riḍā said: "The 'grade' is (the distance) between the heaven and the earth." (*ibid.*)

(21) al-Ṣādiq said about the words of God, *What! when a misfortune befell you while you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much*: "The Muslims had afflicted at Badr one hundred and forty (unbelieving) people—they had killed seventy men and imprisoned seventy. When there came the day of Uḥud, the Muslims were afflicted with seventy men, and they were grieving for them; so (this verse) was revealed." (*ibid.*)

(22) Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Tirmidhī (who said that this tradition is good), Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from ʿAlī that he said: "Gabriel came to the Prophet and said: 'O Muḥammad! Surely God is displeased with what your people have done in taking the prisoners; and He has ordered you to give them option between two things: Either they [the prisoners] are brought forward and beheaded; or they [the Muslims] take ransom [for the prisoners] on the condition that an equal number from among them [the Muslims] shall be killed [later].' So the Messenger of God called the people and explained the matter to them. They said: 'O Messenger of God! [they are] our clans and our people; we shall take their ransom and shall strengthen ourselves by it for fighting against our enemy; and there shall be martyrs from among us equal to their number but it is not something that we might be displeased with.' Thus were martyred seventy men from among them on the day of Uḥud—the number of the prisoners of Badr." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: [al-Ṭabrisī] has narrated it in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* from ʿAlī; and also al-Qummī has quoted it in his *al-Tafsīr*.

(23) al-Bāqir has said about the verse, And reckon not those who are killed in God's way as dead , that it was revealed about the martyrs of Badr and Uḥud together. (*Majmaᶜ al-bayān*)

Author's comments: Numerous traditions of the same meaning have been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* and other books. But you have seen that the verses are general and cover everyone who is actually martyred in the way of God or is counted as a martyr.

Sometimes it is said that these verses were revealed about the martyrs of Biᵓr [that is the Well of] Maᶜūnah. They were seventy or forty Companions of the Prophet whom he had sent to call ᶜĀmir b. al-Ṭufayl and his people to Islam; and they were near that water. [The Companions] sent Abū Milḥān al-Anṣārī ahead to convey the message; but they killed him, then they attacked the rest of the Companions of the Prophet and fought them until they [the enemy] killed all of them. May God be pleased with them.

(24) al-Ṣādiq said about this verse: "They are, by God, our Shīᶜahs. When their souls enter the Garden and they receive the honor from God, the Mighty, the Great, they acquire knowledge and certainty that surely they were on the truth and on the religion of God, the Mighty, the Great; so they rejoice on account of those who have not yet joined them, from among their brothers, who are left behind them from among the believers." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ᶜAyyāshī)

Author's comments: It is based on the "flow" of the Qur'an. That they would acquire knowledge and certainty of their being on the truth, means that they would perceive it by the eye of certainty, after they had known it in this world by knowledge of certainty. It does not mean that before that they had any doubt or uncertainty about it.

(25) Aḥmad, Hannād, ᶜAbd b. Ḥamīd, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ḥākim (who said that this tradition is correct) and al-Bayhaqī (in his *Dalāᵓil al-nubūwwah*) have narrated from Ibn ᶜAbbās that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'When your brethren were afflicted (that is martyred) in Uḥud, God put their souls inside the green birds, who come to the Garden's rivers, and eat from its fruits and lodge in a golden candelabra suspended in the shadow of the Throne. 'So when they found the goodness of their food and drink, and beauty of their resting place, they said: "Would that our brothers knew what God has done for us."

> ' Another narration says: 'They said: "[Would that our brothers knew that] we are alive in the Garden, getting sustenance, so that they would not abandon *jihād* and would not shrink from fighting." Thereupon, God said: "I shall convey to them [this message] on your behalf." So God sent down these verses: *And reckon not those who are killed …*' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: There are numerous traditions of this theme, narrated from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd, Abu al-ʿĀliyah, Ibn ʿAbbās and others. Some of these traditions, like that of Abu al-ʿĀliyah, use the phrase, 'in the forms of green birds'; others like that of Abū Saʿīd say, 'in the green birds'; yet others like that of Ibn Masʿūd say, 'like green birds'; but all the wordings convey almost similar meanings.

It has come to us through the chains reaching to the Imāms of the Ahl al-bayt that the above tradition was put before them and they denied that it was said by the Prophet; some traditions say that they interpreted that tradition in some other way; and there is no doubt that—keeping in view the confirmed and accepted principles—that tradition has to be interpreted away, if it is not rejected altogether.

In any case, those traditions do not purport to describe the martyrs' condition in the Garden of the hereafter; rather they refer to the Garden of *al-Barzakh*. It is proved by the tradition of Ibn Jarīr from Mujāhid in which he says: 'They are given sustenance from the fruit of the Garden and feel its scent but they are not in it.' Also, Ibn Jarīr narrates from al-Suddī in which he says: 'Surely the souls of the martyrs are inside the green birds in golden candelabra hanging from the Throne; so they pick their food in the Garden in morning and evening, and lodge at night in the candelabra.' As you have seen in the earlier discourse on al-Barzakh that these themes may fit the Garden of this world, but not on that of the hereafter.

(26) As regards the verses: (As for) those who responded to the call of God and the Messenger …, Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Jarīr and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Dalāʾil*) have narrated from ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Ḥazm that he said: "The Messenger of God came out [proceeding] towards Ḥamrāʾ al-Asad; and Abū Sufyān [and his retreating army] had unanimously decided to return to [reattack] the Messenger of God and his Companions. They said [to each other]: 'We have returned before annihilating them (that is, the Muslims); certainly we must attack their remnants again.' Then news reached him (that is, Abū Sufyān) that

the Prophet had come out with his Companions in his pursuit. This (news) dissuaded Abū Sufyān and his army [from pursuing their plan]; Some riders from the tribe of ʿAbdu al-Qays passed them; so Abū Sufyān. said to them: 'Give the news to Muḥammad that we [the Quraysh] have decided to reattack his Companions aiming at their annihilation.' The riders met the Messenger of God at Ḥamrāʾ al-Asad, and informed him as Abū Sufyān had asked them to do. But the Messenger of God and the believers with him said: 'God is sufficient for us and most excellent Protector is He.' Thereupon God revealed about it: *(As for) those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger* (*al-Durr al-manthūr*).

Author's comments: al-Qummī has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr* in detail; he reports, inter alia, that the Prophet had taken with him to Ḥamrāʾ al-Asad only those of the Companions who had been wounded [at Uḥud]. Some other traditions say that he had taken only those who were with him at Uḥud. Practically the import of both reports is the same.

(27) Mūsá b. ʿAqabah (in his *al-Maghāzī*) and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Dalāʾil*) have narrated from Ibn Shahāb that he said: "Surely the Messenger of God called the Muslims together to be at the appointed time at Badr for [fighting] Abū Sufyān [about a year after the battle of Badr]. The Satan thereupon instigated his friends among the men who went to the people frightening them and saying: 'We have been informed that they (the polytheists) have gathered for fighting you an army like the (dark) night, they hope to attack you and plunder you. Therefore, beware, beware.' But God protected the Muslims from the frightening [campaign] of the Satan; and they responded to the call of God and His Messenger, and came out with their [trade] articles; they said: 'If we meet Abū Sufyān, then it is for what we have come forth; and if we did not meet him then we would sell our articles.' (Badr was the site of an annual trade-fare.] So, they went forth until they reached the fare-ground of Badr, and they fulfilled their needs there; while Abū Sufyān failed to reach the rendezvous—neither he nor his companions did come forth. Meanwhile, Ibn Ḥamām passed from near them (the Muslims) and asked: 'Who are these?' People told him: '(They are) the Messenger of God and his Companions (who are) waiting for Abū Sufyān and his group of the Quraysh.' He then went to the Quraysh and told

them the news. This frightened Abū Sufyān who went back to Mecca. And the Messenger of God returned to Medina with God's favor and grace. This *al-ghazwah*[1] is called the expedition of the army of *al-sawīq*[2]; and it was in Shaʿbān, the third year of *hijrah*." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: [al-Suyūṭī] has narrated it from another chain too. [al-Ṭabrisī] has narrated it in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, in detail, from al-Bāqir, in which he, inter alia, says that the verses were revealed about the *ghazwah* of the Lesser Badr; and that the army of *sawīq* refers to that of Abū Sufyān, because he had come out from Mecca with an army of the Quraysh; and they had with them loads of *sawīq* (as provision). They camped out of Mecca and sustained themselves with the *sawīq*, and then they returned to Mecca because they became frightened of meeting the Muslims at Badr. Therefore, the people called them the "army of *sawīq*", in mockery and derision.

(28) al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Ṭabarānī have narrated through correct chain from ʿIkrimah from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: "When the polytheists returned from Uḥud, they said [to each other]: 'Neither you killed Muḥammad, nor you took buxom girls with you [as captives] on the camels. Wretched is what you have done! Return [to attack the Muslims].' The Messenger of God heard the news; so he called the Muslims and they gathered until he reached Ḥamrāʾ al-Asad or the Well of Abū ʿUtbah. (The doubt is from Sufyān, [one of the narrators]). Then the polytheists said: 'We shall come back next year.' Therefore, the Messenger of God too returned. So it was counted as *al-ghazwah*. Thereupon, God revealed, *(As for) those who responded to the call of God and the Messenger.* Indeed Abū Sufyān said to the Prophet: 'Your appointed place and time is the fare of Badr where you had slain our companions.' So as for the coward, he returned, and as for the brave, he took (his) fighting arms and trade-articles; then they came there (that is Badr) but did not find anyone there; so they sold and bought [at the fare]; then God revealed: *So they returned*

1 *al-Ghazwah*, means military expedition; in Islamic terminology it is used for every expedition in which the Prophet participated—irrespective of whether there was any fighting or not. (Trans.)

2 *al-Sawīq*, means a kind of mush made of wheat or barley. (Trans.)

with favor from Allah and (His) grace." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: We have quoted this tradition here although it goes against the principle of brevity and abridgement which we generally observe in the traditions. We have quoted here comprehensive examples of every theme, in order that a discerning research scholar may understand that what the scholars have written regarding the causes of revelation is—all or most of it—based on personal views; that is, generally they would describe historical events, then write after it the Qur'anic verses which would correspond with the theme; and then they would count that event as the cause of that verse's revelation. Often this results in fragmentation of a single verse, or a set of verses of a single context, and then they ascribe each part to an independent cause of revelation—even if it disturbs the verse's structure or negates its context. It is one of the causes of weakness in those traditions that are narrated about the occasions of revelation.

Add to it what we have mentioned in the beginning of this topic that sectarian differences and inclinations have greatly influenced the style and tone of these traditions as everyone has tried to pull them in the direction of his particular belief and view.

Moreover, political environment and ruling atmosphere has in every era strongly put its stamp on the realities either by hiding it completely or covering it in ambiguity. Therefore, a thinking scholar should never close his eyes from these factors which have utmost relevance to the understanding of realities. And God is the Guide.

The Martyrs of Uḥud

Seventy Muslims were martyred on the day of Uḥud, the list of their names being as follows:

Ḥamzah b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim.
ʿAbdullāh b. Jaḥsh.
Muṣʿab b. ʿUmayr.
Shammās b. ʿUthmān. (These four martyrs were from the Emigrants.)
ʿAmr b. Muʿādh b. al-Nuʿmān.
al-Ḥārith b. Anas b. Rāfiʿ.
ʿUmmārah b. Ziyād b. al-Sakan.
Salamah b. Thābit b. Waqsh.
ʿAmr b. Thābit b. Waqsh.
Thābit b. Waqsh.

Rifāʿah b. Waqsh.
Ḥusayl b. Jābir (alias al-Yamān [father of Ḥudhayfah]).
Ṣayfī b. Qayẓī.
Ḥabāb b. Qayẓī.
ʿAbbād b. Sahl.
al-Ḥārith b. Aws b. Muʿādh.
Iyās b. Aws.
ʿUbayd b. at-Tayyihān.
Ḥabīb b. Yazīd b. Taym.
Yazīd b. Ḥāṭib b. Umayyah b. Rāfiʿ.
Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith b. Qays b. Zayd.
Ḥanẓalah b. Abī ʿĀmir (the one washed by the angels).
Unays b. Qatādah.
Abū Ḥayyah b. ʿAmr b. Thābit.
ʿAbdullāh b. Jubayr b. al-Nuʿmān (the Commander of the archers).
Khaythamah (the father of Saʿd b. Khaythamah).
ʿAbdullāh b. Salamah.
Subayʿ b. al-Ḥāṭib b. al-Ḥārith.
ʿAmr b. Qays.
Qays b. ʿAmr b. Qays
Thābit b. ʿAmr b. Zayd.
ʿĀmir b. Makhlad.
Abū Hubayrah b. al-Ḥārith b. ʿAlqamah b. ʿAmr.
ʿAmr b. Muṭarrif b. ʿAlqamah b. ʿAmr.
Aws b. Thābit b. al-Mundhir (brother of Ḥassān b. Thābit).
Anas b. al-Naḍr (uncle of Anas b. Mālik, the servant of the Holy Prophet).
Qays b. Mukhallad.
Kaysān (slave of Banū Māzin b. al-Najjār).
Sulaym b. al-Ḥārith.
Nuʿmān b. ʿAbd ʿAmr.
Khārijah b. Zayd b. Abī Zuhayr.
Saʿd b. al-Rabīʿ b. ʿAmr b. Abī Zuhayr (these two [Khārijah and Saʿd] were buried in one grave).
Aws b. al-Arqam.
Mālik b. Sinān al-Khudrī (father of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī).
Saʿīd b. Suwayd.
ʿUtbah b. Rabīʿ.

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Thaʿlabah b. Saʿd b. Mālik.
Thaqf b. Farwah b. al-Badiyy.
ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAmr b. Wahb.
Ḍamrah (an ally of Banū Ṭarīf).
Nawfal b. ʿAbdillāh.
ʿAbbās b. ʿUbādah.
Nuʿmān b. Mālik b. Thaʿlabah.
al-Mujadhdhar b. Ziyād.
ʿUbādah b. al-Ḥasḥās (these three [Nuʿmān, al-Mujadhdhar and ʿUbādah] were buried in one grave).
Rifāʿah b. ʿAmr.
ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAmr (from Banū Ḥarām).
ʿAmr b. al-Jamūḥ (from Banū Ḥarām).
Khallād b. ʿAmr b. al-Jamūḥ.
Abū Ayman (slave of ʿAmr b. al-Jamūḥ).
Sulaym b. ʿAmr b. Ḥadīdah.
ʿAntarah (slave of Sulaym).
Sahl b. Qays b. Abī Kaʿb.
Dhakwān b. ʿAbd Qays.
ʿUbayd b. al-Muʿallā.
Mālik b. Numaylah.
Ḥārith b. ʿAbdī b. Kharashah.
Mālik b. Iyās.
Iyās b. ʿAdī.
ʿAmr b. Iyās.

This list of the seventy martyrs has been taken from *al-Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām.

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Verses 176-180

These verses have some connection with those revealed about the battle of Uḥud. These and especially the first four of them are probably a sort of epilogue to the preceding ones. The most important theme of the preceding talk was the principle of test and trial which God makes His servants to undergo. Therefore, these are like the sum total of the verses of Uḥud. God describes here that the test and trial is an established and continual system from which no one—neither a believer nor an unbeliever—can escape; God will certainly test both in order to expose and unveil the hidden realities of their souls; in this way the unbeliever will become totally fit for the Fire, and the evil will become separated from the good in the believer.

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾

(3:176-177) ***And let not those grieve you who fall into unbelief hastily; surely they can do no harm to Allah at all; Allah intends that He should not give them any portion in the hereafter, and they shall have a great chastisement. Surely those who have bought unbelief at the price of faith shall do no harm at all to Allah, and they shall have a painful chastisement.***

The verse [3:176] consoles the Prophet and removes sorrow by describing the reality of the whole affair. The unbelievers compete with each other in rushing towards disbelief; they help one another to extinguish the light of God and sometimes even succeed in overpowering the believers. It sometimes grieves the believers as it seems as if they (the unbelievers) have scored against God by thwarting His plan to make the word of truth triumphant. But if the believer ponders on the system of general and all-encompassing test, he will become sure that it is God Who is victorious;

and that all persons are relentlessly proceeding to their destination in order that their creative and legislative guidance to their goals may be completed. The unbeliever is driven to that goal by the health and strength, bounty and comfort that he is provided with—God in this way draws him nearer to his destruction in degrees and unfolds His plan against him—enabling him to go to the furthest possible limit of transgression and disobedience. The believer on the other hand is continuously scraped through test and trial until his belief and faith is cleansed from all rust and pollution, and he becomes absolutely pure for God; while the unbeliever's polytheistic tendencies are purged of every shade of belief and he falls down where other friends of false deities and leaders of infidelity have gone.

The verse therefore means as follows: You should not grieve on account of those who proceed with increasing haste towards disbelief. Why should you grieve? Do you think as if they can do any harm to God? Certainly you cannot think so, because they cannot do any harm to God; they are under complete control of God, and He is driving them in their lives' journey to their goal where they will be left with no portion, no share, in the hereafter (and it is the final limit of their infidelity); and they shall have a painful chastisement. The prohibition, therefore, in the clause, "And let not those grieve you", is of advisory nature; the clause, "surely they can do no harm to God", describes the reason of that prohibition; and the next words, "God intends that He should not give them", explains why they are unable to do any harm to God.

Thereafter God makes it clear that no unbeliever—whether he hastens to fall into disbelief or not—can do any harm to Him. The next verse [3:177] thus states the general principle after mentioning a particular case. This may serve as the reason for the preceding prohibition, "And let not those grieve you", or it may be treated as the reason of the preceding reason, "surely they can do no harm"—because it has a general import which may explain the purpose of a particular reason. The meaning thus will be as follows: We have said that those who fall into disbelief hastily can do no harm to God, because no unbeliever can do any harm to Him.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

(3:178) ***And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respite is good for their souls; We grant them respite only***

that they may increase in sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement.

After putting the Prophet's mind at rest regarding the unbelievers falling into unbelief hastily, and explaining that in all this they are in fact subservient to God's plan, Who is driving them to a stage where they shall have no share in the hereafter, God now turns to the unbelievers themselves. He tells them that they should not be happy with the respite granted to them by God, because God through this respite is giving them a chance to pile up sins over sins, and behind it all there is a disgraceful chastisement waiting for them—there is nothing for them except shame and ignominy in the hereafter. This all is based on the divinely established system of completion that every creature should bring his potentials to fruition, according to his own choice.

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ
الطَّيِّبِ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ
رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

(3:179) ***On no account will Allah leave the believers in the condition which you are in until He separates the evil from the good; nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but Allah chooses of His messengers whom He pleases; therefore believe in Allah and His messengers; and if you believe and guard (against evil), then you shall have a great reward.***

Now the Speaker turns to the believers. He explains to them that the system of test and trial covers them too, in order that they too should reach the stage of completion; and the purified believer may be distinguished from the impure, and evil and wicked ones may be separated from the good and virtuous ones.

The next sentence aims at removing a possible misconception. It could be assumed that there was another way of distinguishing evil from good; that is, God could let the believers know who was wicked and evil so that they could avoid him. Thus, they could easily be saved all these troubles and turmoils which they had to suffer because of their commingling with

hypocrites and those whose hearts were diseased. God erases such erroneous impression by pointing out that He has exclusively reserved the knowledge of unseen to Himself, He does not reveal it to anyone except to some chosen messengers whom He might acquaint with it. This is the import of the sentence, "nor is God going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but God chooses of His messengers whom He pleases."

Thereafter, God says to them: As there is no escape from test and trial, nor from turning the potentials into accomplishments, it is in your interest that you should believe in God and His messengers, so that you should be counted among the good ones—and not among the evil ones. But mere belief is not sufficient to preserve the blessedness of the life, it is also necessary to support it with good deeds that would raise the belief up to God and preserve its blessings—it is then that the reward would be complete. It was with this connotation in view that the Qur'an first said, "therefore believe in God and His messengers", and then completed it with the next clause, "and if you believe and guard (against evil), then you shall have a great reward."

It is evident from this verse that:

First: Every soul has to reach its perfection, has to be brought to its goal and destination—be it felicity and happiness or infelicity and unhappiness. It is an issue which cannot be avoided, a proposition from which there is no escape.

Second: The good and the evil are attributed to the "self" or "soul" of the persons, but at the same time and in the same context they depend on the belief and the disbelief respectively—and these two are within man's power and emanate from his will and choice. This is among the finest Qur'anic realities which opens the door to many secrets of monotheism. It may be understood from the words of God: *And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore hasten to (do) good works* [2:148], when read in conjunction with the words: *but that He might try you in what He gave you, therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds* [5:48]. We shall write on this topic in full detail under the verse: *That Allah may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into hell* [8:37].

Third: The belief in God and His messengers is the essence of the goodness of life, that is, goodness of "person" or "soul." So far as reward is concerned it depends upon piety and good deeds. That is why God has first mentioned the subject of separating the good from the evil; then basing

on that, has given the order to believe in God and His messengers; thereafter when He wanted to mention the reward, He added piety (guarding against evil) to the belief; and said: "and if you believe and guard (against evil), then you shall have a great reward."

From the above, you may easily understand the connotation of the verse 97 of chapter 16: *Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did.* Evidently his happy life is the result of his belief, and emanates from it; but the reward is the result of the good deeds. Therefore, belief is the soul of the good life. But its continuity—so that it may produce the desired effects—requires good deeds. It is like the natural life which depends on a soul for its coming into being but its continuity depends on the use of its powers and organs—if all become still, all will die and life will end.

The name, *Allah*, has been repeated several [that is four] times in this verse. There was a possibility of using pronouns in place of the latter three, but the proper Divine Name was used so that it might clearly guide to the Source of all greatness and beauty, because the verses were related to those affairs which are exclusively reserved to Him in His divinity, that is, the test of the creatures, knowledge of the unseen, selection of the messengers and man's ability to believe in Him.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۖ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ ۖ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

(3:180) ***And let not those deem, who are niggardly in giving away that which Allah has granted them out of His grace, that it is good for them; nay, it is worse for them; they shall have that whereof they were niggardly made to encircle their necks on the Resurrection Day; and Allah's is the heritage of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is aware of what you do.***

The preceding verse [3:178] has described how God gives respite to the unbelievers. The case of niggardliness, of not spending the wealth in the way of God, is not different from that; a niggardly person rejoices in, and boasts of, the riches he has amassed. Therefore God now addresses them

and shows that what they are proud of, is actually worse for them. The wealth is described as, *that which Allah has granted them out of His grace*; it shows how mean they are and how much they should be condemned. The description, that the wealth which they are so niggardly about shall become like iron collar around their necks, shows why their niggardliness is worse for them. The clause, *and Allah's is the heritage of the heavens and the earth*, is apparently a circumstantial one related to "the Resurrection Day", that is, on the Resurrection Day when to God will belong the said heritage. The same is the position of the last clause, *and Allah is aware of what you do.*

As a remote possibility, the words, *and Allah's is the heritage …*, may be treated as the circumstantial clause of the verb, "are niggardly"; while the next clause, *and Allah is aware of what you do*, may have the same position [that is circumstantial clause of, "are niggardly"], or may be treated as an independent sentence.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Bāqir was asked about the unbeliever whether death was better for him or life. He said: "Death is better for the believer and the unbeliever (both); because God says, *and that which is with Allah is best for the righteous* [3;198], and He (also) says: *And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respite is good for their souls.*" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: The argument given in this tradition does not fully conform with the style of the Imāms of the Ahl al-bayt, because the word, "righteous", refers to only a particular group of the believers, not to all of them. Although it may be said that the word covers all the believers because each of them has got some portion of righteousness in him.

(2) A tradition of the above meaning has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, from Ibn Masʿūd.

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Verses 181-189

These verses are connected with the preceding ones. The general import of the preceding verses was to invigorate the believers and inspire them to fight in the way of God with their properties and their lives, as well as to warn them against their weak hearts, cowardice and niggardliness. This connects it to the Jews' talk that *Allah is poor and we are rich*, together with their upsetting the Muslims' affairs, rejecting the evidence of messengership and hiding what they had been enjoined to make known. These are the very topics which these verses deal with. In addition, they strengthen the believers' hearts to remain firm and steadfast; urge them to be patient and courageous; and exhort them to spend in the way of God.

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ ۘ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوا وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَنَقُولُ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿١٨١﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ ﴿١٨٢﴾

(3:181-182) ***Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: "Surely Allah is poor and we are rich." We shall certainly write what they say, and their killing the prophets unjustly, and We shall say: "Taste the chastisement of burning. This is for what your (own) hands have sent before and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants."***

Those who said were the Jews, as may be understood from the next clause which mentions their slaying of the prophets, apart from other indications.

They said it after they had heard such divine words as, *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan …* (2:245). This view is somewhat strengthened when it is noted that this verse comes immediately after the one which condemns niggardly person: "And let not those deem, who are niggardly in giving away …" Or may be they said it when they saw the poverty and starvation of most of the believers. They taunted them saying that had their Lord been rich, He would have taken care of them and made them rich; therefore He is but poor while we are rich.

We shall certainly write what they say, and their killing the prophets unjustly, and We shall say: "Taste the chastisement of burning: Writing here means preservation and recording; or it may refer to the writing in the scroll of their deeds—the net result is the same in both cases. Their killing the prophets unjustly means that they had killed them knowingly and intentionally—not by mistake, ignorance or misunderstanding. God has joined this utterance of theirs to their slaying of the prophets because this was a very grievous word; *al-ḥarīq* (translated here as burning) refers to the Hell-fire; or flame; it has been said that it has a transitive sense, that is, that which burns something.

This is for what your (own) hands have sent before and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants": This clause, "what your (own) hands have sent before", means 'whatever deeds you have sent before'; hands have been mentioned because usually they are instrumental in sending a thing somewhere. The clause, "and because God is not in the least unjust to the servants", is in conjunction with the words, "what your (own) hands have sent", and they explain the reason for recording and punishment. If God had not recorded their deeds and not rewarded or punished them accordingly, it would have been tantamount to neglecting the system of the deeds; and this in its turn would have been a gross and enormous injustice because huge number of deeds would be involved—in this way God would become most unjust to the servants; far above is He from such things.

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَهِدَ إِلَيْنَا أَلَّا نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُولٍ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَأْكُلُهُ النَّارُ ۗ قُلْ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِي بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالَّذِي قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

(3:183) ***(Those are they) who said: "Surely Allah has enjoined us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering which the fire consumes." Say: "Indeed, there came to you messengers before me with clear evidences and with that which you said; why did you kill them if you are truthful?"***

It is related to the preceding, "those who said." *al-ʿAhd* (enjoining; order); *al-qurbān* (that which is offered, is sacrificed like sheep, etc.); "fire consumes" means the fire burns it. The clause, "indeed, there came

to you messengers before me", refers to such prophets as Zachariah and John—those Israelite prophets who were slain by the Jews.

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ ﴿١٨٤﴾

(3:184) ***But if they reject you, so indeed were rejected before you messengers who came with clear evidences and scriptures and the illuminating Book.***

It aims at consoling the Prophet when they belied him. *al-Zubur* is plural of *al-zabūr* (a book of wisdom and sermons). The phrase, "scriptures and the illuminating book", refers to such revelations as the book of Noah, scriptures of Abraham, the Torah and the Injīl.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۖ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۗ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴿١٨٥﴾

(3:185) ***Every soul shall taste of death, and you shall only be paid fully your reward on the Resurrection Day; then whoever is removed far away from the Fire and is made to enter the Garden, he indeed has attained the object; and the life of this world is nothing but a provision of vanities.***

The verse contains a good promise for the believer and a threat to the rejector. It begins with a general rule that encompasses every living being. *al-Tawfiyah* means full payment. Someone has proved the existence of *al-Barzakh* from this verse, because it implies some partial recompense before the Resurrection Day, when the full payment will be made. It is a good argument.

al-Zaḥzaḥah (meaning to remove far), in fact implies repeated pulling with haste; *al-fawz* (to attain the desired object); *al-ghurūr* is either infinitive of *gharra* (he deceived; he deluded) or plural of *al-ghārr* (deceiver).

لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا ۚ وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿١٨٦﴾

(3:186) ***You shall certainly be tried respecting your wealth and your souls, and you shall certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before you and from those who are polytheists much annoying (talk); and if you are patient and guard (against evil), surely this is one of the matters of (great) resolve.***

al-Iblāʾ (to test; to try). God first described the tests and trials that had afflicted the believers; then He mentioned the utterances of the Jews which could weaken the believers' will. Now He informs them that such divine tests and such annoying talks of the People of the Book and the polytheists will repeatedly affect the believers; that they will have to face such things and bear such talks. They should remain patient and pious, should guard themselves against evil, in order that God may protect them from mistakes and their weak hearts; so that they should emerge as people of strong and firm determination.

This prophecy gives them advance news of what they would have to suffer in future; it aims at preparing them mentally for it before hand, so that they may reconcile themselves to it. *Adhan kathīran* (much annoyance) has been used for "annoying talk"; it is a metaphorical use of effect in place of cause.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ
فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

(3:187) ***And when Allah made a covenant with those who were given the Book: "You shall certainly make it known to men and you shall not hide it"; but they cast it behind their backs and took a small price for it; so evil is that which they buy.***

al-Nabdh (to cast away; to throw away); "they cast it behind their backs" is an idiom meaning 'they left it', 'they neglected it'. Its opposite idiom, 'he put it before his eyes', means 'he directed his attention to it'.

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أَتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا
فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

(3:188-189) ***Do not think those who rejoice for what they have***

brought about and love that they should be praised for what they have not done—so by no means think them to be safe from the chastisement, and they shall have a painful chastisement. And Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and Allah has power above all things.

The phrase, "for what they have brought about", means the wealth that God has bestowed upon them[1], which is accompanied by love of riches and niggardliness. *al-Mafāzah* means deliverance; safety. These people were destroyed because their hearts were attached to the falsehood, and consequently they removed themselves from the protection of the truth.

At the end, God mentions His Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and His power over everything. These two attributes may explain the reason of all things described in the preceding verses.

Examining Narrations

(1) Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Qatādah about the verse, *God has certainly heard the saying of those …*, that he said: "It has been reported to us that it was revealed about Huyayy b. Akhtab; when the verse [2:245] was revealed that: *Who is it that will lend to God, a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold*, he said: 'Our Lord asks loan from us! Surely a poor (man) asks loan from a rich one.' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(2) al-Ṣādiq said regarding this verse: "By God, they had not seen God so that they could know He was poor. But they saw the friends of God (who were) poor. So they said: 'Had He (God) been rich He would have made His friends rich.' Thus, they boasted against God of (their) riches." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(3) al-Bāqir said: "They are those who think that the Imām is in need of what they bring to him." (*al-Manāqib*)

Author's comments: As described in the Commentary, the first two meanings correspond to the verse. The third tradition is based on the "flow" of the Qur'an.

(4) al-Ṣādiq said: "There was, between those who uttered (this word)

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1 Evidently it is a slip of pen. The meaning given by the author could be in place if the verb had been in passive voice, that is, *ūtū* (they were given; they were brought). But it is in active voice, that is, *ataw* (they brought; they gave). (Trans.)

and those who killed (the prophets), a gap of five hundred years; but God attached to them the (crime of) murder because they were pleased with what they [that is, their ancestors] had done." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: The gap mentioned in it does not agree with the current Christian Era. See the historical discourse given earlier.

(5) It is reported in *al-Durr al-manthūr* under the verse: *Every soul shall taste of death*: "Ibn Abī Ḥātim has narrated from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib that he said: 'When the Prophet died and the condolence began, there came to them a comer—they heard his voice but did not see his person—and he said: "Peace be upon you, O People of the House! and mercy of God and His blessings. Every soul is to taste of the death, and you shall only be paid fully your reward on the Resurrection Day. Indeed, there is in God consolation for every misfortune, and successor of everyone who dies, and overtaking everything that is lost. Therefore, in God put your trust, and to Him attach your hope; because afflicted is he who is deprived of reward." ' Then ʿAlī said: 'He was al-Khiḍr.' "

(6) Ibn Marduway has narrated from Sahl b. Saʿd that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'Verily, a place in the Garden (just sufficient) to put a whip of one of you in, is better than the world and all that is in it.' Then he recited this verse: then whoever is removed far away from the fire and is made to enter the Garden, he indeed has attained the object." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: [al-Suyūṭī] has narrated this meaning in that book through other chains from other Companions. It should be noted here that there are numerous traditions purporting to give the reason of revelation of these verses; but we have left them out because evidently they are merely people's attempts to apply the verses to various events; they are not real reasons of revelation.

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Verses 190-199

These verses give the resume of the conditions of the believers, the polytheists and the People of the Book as represented in this chapter. They explain the characteristics of the righteous believers that they always remember God and reflect on His signs; they seek God's protection from His chastisement and beseech for His forgiveness and the Garden; and that God has accepted their prayers and will surely give them what they have asked for. This is the general condition of the believers. As for the unbelievers, although they fearlessly roam the earth, but it is a brief enjoyment; and soon they will abide in the Hell-fire. One should not compare the believers with them. The only exception is of those People of the Book who have left their evil ways to follow the truth they are with the believers.

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إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾

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(3:190) ***Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men of understanding.***

Most probably, the word, "creation", here has a comprehensive connotation, denoting as to how these things came into being, what are their characteristics, properties and other concomitants like movement and stillness, changes and variations. In that case, the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day would encompass all the great phenomena of creation. Its explanation has been given in the chapter of The Cow[1]; so has also the meaning of the "men of understanding"[2]

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الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ

1 In the Commentary of 3:7. (Auth.); see *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 5. (Trans.)

2 In the Commentary of 2:164. (Auth.); see *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol 2. (Trans.)

النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ ۖ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾

(3:191-192) ***Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the Fire. Our Lord! surely whomsoever Thou makest enter the Fire, him Thou hast indeed brought to disgrace, and there shall be no helpers for the unjust***

That is, they remember God in every condition—whether they are standing, sitting or lying down. We have earlier explained the meaning of "remembrance" and "reflection." The gist of the two verses is as follows: Observation of the signs of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day has made them remember God continuously and at all times; they never forget Him in any situation. Also that observation has led them to reflection and meditation on the creation of the heavens and the earth; through it they remember that God will surely raise them again for awarding the recompense; therefore, they ask from God His mercy and beseech Him to fulfil His promise.

Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the Fire: The demonstrative pronoun used here is *hādhā* (this) which is singular and masculine, although the things referred to are plural and feminine. It is because the speakers are not concerned with particular names or distinct identification of each and every item; they look at the whole as a single creation. It is the same style that has been used in 6:78, where Abraham is quoted as saying: *Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord; this is greater!"* [In this verse, where God describes the rising and setting of the sun, the feminine words have been used—as is normally done. But Abraham is reported to use masculine pronouns and words for it. Abraham did so] because at that time he was completely unaware of its name or its characteristics—except that it was a "thing", [and "thing" in Arabic is masculine].

al-Bāṭil (untrue, futile, vain) is that which has no purpose, no aim. God says: *then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people it remains in the earth* [13:17]. That is why

when they realized that the creation was not in vain, they understood that God would surely gather the people for recompense; and that at that time God would mete out to the unjust people a disgraceful punishment, that is, Hell. They also knew that there was none who could ward off the underlying principle of chastisement; otherwise, the creation would be in vain. It is the connotation of their prayer: *…save us then from the chastisement of the Fire: Our Lord! surely whosoever Thou makest to enter the Fire, him Thou hast indeed brought to disgrace; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust.*

رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِى لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا ۚ رَبَّنَا
فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا وَآتِنَا مَا
وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

(3:193-194) ***Our Lord! surely we heard a crier calling to the faith, saying: 'Believe in your Lord'; so we did believe; Our Lord! forgive us therefore our faults, and cover our evil deeds and make us die with the righteous. Our Lord! and grant us what Thou hast promised us by Thy messengers and disgrace us not on the Day of Ressurection; surely Thou dost not break the promise"***

The crier or caller refers to the Messenger of God. The clause, "saying: Believe", describes the cry or call; *an* (translated here as, saying) is explicative. They affirm before God that they have believed in the crier, that is, the Messenger. He has brought to them news of many things from God; some of which he has warned them against, example—sins, faults, death in infidelity and transgression; and some others he has exhorted them to do or seek, example—forgiveness, mercy, details of the Garden (which God has promised his believing and righteous servants). Therefore, they pray to their Lord to forgive them, to cover their faults, and to make them die with His righteous servants. Also, they ask Him to fulfil His promise to them—the Garden and the mercy—which the messengers have guaranteed to them by God's permission. Thus they said: "forgive us therefore our faults …"; *ʿalā rusulika* (translated here as, by Thy messengers) literally means, 'on Thy messengers'; that is, the promise which Thou didst give to Thy messengers, and they guaranteed it to us on Thy behalf; "and disgrace us not", that is, by not fulfilling the promise; it is because of this implication

that the verse ends on, "surely Thou dost not break the promise."

These verses clearly show that those believers acquired the belief in God and the hereafter and believed that God had been sending His messengers—they got these beliefs by reflecting on the signs of God. As for the details of that which the Prophet had brought, they learned them by believing in the Prophet. They, thus, follow the nature in that which may be known by reflecting on the nature and creation; and in other matters they accept and obey what they are told by the Prophet.

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ ۖ
بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي
سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾

(3:195) ***So their Lord accepted their prayer: "That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other; they, therefore, who emigrated, and were turned out of their homes, and were persecuted in My way, and fought, and were slain, I will most certainly cover their evil deeds, and I will most certainly make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow"; a reward from Allah, and with Allah is yet better reward.***

Using the word, 'Lord,' and relating it to them ["their Lord"] points to the quickening and intensity of the divine mercy. Also the unrestricted sentence, "I will not waste the work of a worker among you", points to this reality. There is no discrimination between one work and the other, nor between one worker and another.

The next sentence (that branches out from the above), that is, *they, therefore, who emigrated, and were turned out of their homes, and were persecuted in My way, and fought, and were slain*, aims at describing some good deeds for the description of their reward. The conjunctive ("and") have been used for enumeration only, not for combination; otherwise the described reward would be reserved for only those Emigrants who were martyred and combined all these attributes.

Even then, the verse mentions only those virtues and deeds which this chapter exhorts the believers to acquire and do, which puts utmost

emphasis on, that is, giving preference to religion over one's home town or country, patiently bearing the troubles in the way of God and fighting in the cause of religion.

Apparently, emigration encompasses all types of fleeing, be it from polytheism, or family, or home. This may be inferred from three factors: (1) The word used, "emigrated", is unrestricted and unqualified; (2) It is followed by the phrase, "and were turned out of their homes", which denotes a particular type of emigration and it shows that the former refers to all types of "going out"; and (3) It is followed later by the clause, "I will most certainly cover their evil deeds"; in the Qur'anic language the word, *al-sayyiʾāt* (evil; evil deeds) is apparently used for small and minor sins[1]; it means that they have already fled from major sins earlier through abstaining or repenting from them. All this shows that the emigration or fleeing mentioned here is more comprehensive. (Try to understand it.)

لَا يَغُرَّنَّكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾

(3:196-197) ***Let it not deceive you that those who disbelieve go to and fro in the cities (fearlessly). A brief enjoyment! then their abode is hell, and evil is the resting place.***

It purports to remove a possible misunderstanding. The meaning is: "This is the condition and reward of the righteous believers. But as for the unbelievers, you should not be deceived by their affluence and opulence, their luxurious life and abundant riches (the pronoun, being singular, addresses the Prophet, but the talk is actually meant for the ears of the other people); after all, it is but a brief enjoyment which has no permanence."

لَٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نُزُلًا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِلْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٨﴾

(3:198) ***But as to those who fear (the wrath of) their Lord, they shall have gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding in them;***

1 Not always. The verse 78 of chapter 11 uses this word for sodomy, one of the greatest sins. (Trans.)

and entertainment from their Lord, and that which is with Allah is best for the righteous.

al-Nuzul (food, drink and other things served to a guest; here it has been translated as "entertainment"). The phrase, "those who fear (the wrath of) God", refers to the righteous, as may be understood from the last clause of the verse. It supports what we have written above that the verse, "Let it not deceive you … the resting place", aim at removing an unspoken but possible misunderstanding.

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ
خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتَرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩٩﴾

(3:199) ***And most surely of the followers of the Book there are those who believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to you and (in) that which has been revealed to them, humbling themselves before Allah; they do not sell the signs of Allah for a small price; these it is that have their reward with their Lord; surely Allah is quick in reckoning.***

It means that they, like other believers, will get the better reward. It purports to affirm that the next life's happiness is not reserved to any particular nation or tribe—so that the People of the Book would be debarred from it even if they believed. Rather, it depends on believing in God and His messengers. Therefore if they accept true belief, they will become eligible to the hereafter's reward like other believers.

This verse praises these People of the Book in a special manner. It removes from them all those evil traits for which the preceding verses had been condemning other Jews and Christians—differentiating between the messengers of God, hiding what they had made a covenant with God to make known, and selling God's signs and communications for a small price.

A Comparison Between the Qur'an and the Bible Regarding Treatment of Women

Observation and experience confirm that man and woman are two classes of the same species, that is, human being. All the effects and characteristics

that are found in man are also found in woman—without any difference. Undoubtedly when all the characteristics of a species are found in a being it must belong to that species. Of course, some shared traits or characteristics may appear more strongly—or more weakly—in one group than the other; but it does not make that group [for example, woman] less human [than man]. It is clear from the above that the specific potential perfections that are available to one group, are available to the other too. It includes spiritual perfection that is acquired through belief, obedience and other deeds that bring a human being nearer to God. Now it should be clear to you that the best and most comprehensive statement to convey this theme is found in these words of God: "I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other."

Compare it with what the Bible says on this subject, and you will clearly see the difference between the positions taken by the two Books. We find in the Ecclesiastes the following observations:

> I turned my mind to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the sum of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness which is madness. And I found more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters; … One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.[1]

Most of the ancient peoples believed that woman's deeds were not acceptable to God. In Greece she was called an abomination from the Satan's handiwork. The Romans and some Greeks said that she did not have a soul—although man did have an abstract immaterial human soul. The Christians in the Council of 586 C.E. held at France, decided after a lengthy debate that woman was a human being, but she was created to serve man. In England, just a hundred years ago, she was not considered a part of human society. For details refer to the books written on ancient beliefs and opinions as well as on mythology and anthropology—you will find a lot of amazing beliefs.

Examining Narrations

(1) Abū Nuʿaym has narrated in *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ* from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'Meditate on the creation of God, and do not meditate on God (Himself).' " (*al-Durr*

1 Ecclesiastes (Revised Standard Version), chapter 7, vrs. 25–28. (Trans.)

al-manthūr)

Author's comments: This theme has also been narrated from the Prophet through other chains from a number of the Companions, like ʿAbdullāh b. Salām and Ibn ʿUmar. It is narrated through Shīʿah chains too.

Meditation on God (or according to another version, on the person of God) which has been forbidden means meditating on God's "essence"; because God has said: *… they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* [20:110]. So far as His attributes are concerned, the Qur'an is the best witness that it is through them that God may be known; numerous verses exhort the people to know Him by His attributes.

(2) Abu al-Shaykh has narrated in *al-ʿAẓamah* from Abū Hurayrah that he said: "The Messenger of God has said: 'One hour's thought is better than sixty years' worship.' " (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: Some traditions say, "one night's worship"; others say, "one year's worship"; and it is also narrated through Shīʿah narrators.

It has been reported through Sunnī chains that the word of God: *So their Lord accepted their prayer …*, was revealed because of the Mother of the believers, Umm Salamah. She had said to the Prophet: "O Messenger of God! I have not heard God mentioning anyhow the women regarding (their) emigration." Thereupon God revealed the verse, *So their Lord accepted their prayer: That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female …*

The Shīʿah traditions say that the words: *they, therefore, who emigrated, and were turned out of their homes …*, were revealed about ʿAlī when he emigrated with the Fāṭimahs, that is, Fāṭimah bint Asad, Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad and Fāṭimah bint al-Zubayr. Then reached to them at Ḍajnān, Umm Ayman and a few of the weaker believers. So they travelled and they were remembering God in every condition, until they came to the Prophet and (by that time) these verses had been revealed.

The Sunnī traditions say that it was revealed about the Emigrants.

Also, it has been reported that the verse: *Let it not deceive you that those who disbelieve …*, was revealed when some believers expressed the desire for the good life enjoyed by the unbelievers. Also, it has been said that the verse: *And most surely of the followers of the Book there are those who believe …*, was revealed about Negus and some of his companions. When he died, the Messenger of God prayed his funeral prayer at Medina. Some hypocrites blamed him that he was praying for someone who was not on his religion. Then God sent this verse: *And most surely of the followers*

of the Book there are those who believe surely Allah is quick in reckoning.

But all these traditions represent the narrators' endeavours to fit the verses on various events or stories; they do not give the actual reason of revelation.

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Verse 200

This final verse is like the sum total, giving a gist of all that has been said in this chapter. It ends the chapter with a summary of its main theme.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

(3:200) ***O you who believe! be patient and help each other in patience and remain lined up; and fear (the wrath of) Allah, that you may be successful.***

The order is unrestricted. The clause, "be patient", covers every type of patience: Patience in hardships, patience in the obedience of God, and patience against the disobedience of God. However, it refers to individual's patience, as the next clause shows.

al-Muṣābarah translated here as helping each other in patience, literally means vying with one another in being patient. It implies collective patience—when individuals bear a common hardship together and each one's patience is augmented by others' steadfastness.

In this way, their strength is enhanced, their patience redoubled and its effect multiplied. This phenomenon may easily be experienced, if we first look at an individual as a single person, and then look at his behavior in a group when he becomes a part of a collective whole, each one acting on and reacting towards the others. We shall describe this topic in detail, God willing, in its place.

…and remain lined up; and fear (the wrath of) Allah, that you may be successful: *al-murābaṭah* is more comprehensive than *al-muṣābarah* (vying with one another in patience; helping each other to be patient), because *al-murābaṭah*[1] implies people's linking up with one another in

1 *al-Murābaṭah*, in post-Qur'anic era is used for troops being garrisoned, posted, stationed. Many translators have rendered it as, "be ever-garrisoned"; but the author has taken it in its literal and original sense, that is, to be linked with each other. I have used a word (that is remain lined up) which may be interpreted both ways. (Trans.)

their powers, faculties, and activities in all affairs of their religious life—in time of ease as well as in difficulties. As the main aim of these orders is to let the believers attain the reality of happiness of this world and the next—otherwise only partial worldly happiness can be achieved which obviously is not the real happiness—these orders have been followed by the words, "and fear (the wrath of) God, that you may be successful", that is, you may achieve total and real happiness and success.

A Discourse on Believers' Mutual Connection in Islamic Society

1. Man and Society

There is no need to bring a lot of arguments to prove that mankind is a social species. Every member of this species is created with this instinct. Man has always lived in society, as the history says and the archaeological findings show (the finds that are related to the earliest eras when this species lived in and dominated this globe.)

The Qur'an has described this reality in the best possible way in many verses. For example: *O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other…* [49:13]; *We have distributed among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, that some of them may take others in subjection* [43:32]; *… the one of you being from the other* [3:195]; *And He it is Who has created man from the water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage-relationship* [25:54].

There are many other such verses.[1]

2. Man and the Growth of his Society

Human society, like any of man's spiritual characteristics or its related factors, was not born[2] in its complete and perfect shape; there was a lot of room for development and improvement. Like all other concomitants of humanity, the society too kept growing and improving with man's progress in his material and spiritual journey. It would be unrealistic to

1 Look into the places related to each verse to see how they prove our theme. (Auth.)

2 Or, when it first appeared. (Ed.)

expect this human characteristic to be different from other factors—to think that it would appear from the very beginning in its perfect shape. Rather it, like man's other characteristics related to his knowledge and will, has gradually progressed from the primitive to the advanced stage, and the process continues.

It appears from history that the first social group that appeared was the domestic circle based on marriage, because its natural agent (the procreative organs) was the most powerful factor in bringing people together. It was not, for example, like food gathering and eating which could be done alone. Satisfaction of sexual urge required union of two persons [and it laid the foundation of society]. From it gradually emanated the instinct which we have earlier called the instinct of exploitation. It takes shape when a man, dominating over and forcing another person, uses him to fulfil his [dominating one's] needs and plans. Then it took the shape of headship or leadership, example—head of the family, patriarch of the clan, chief of the tribe, and president of the nation. Naturally, in the beginning the leadership went to the strongest and bravest; after sometime it was given to him who was bravest and richest, and also had many children. Thus, the views kept changing until now it goes to him who is thought to be the most efficient in administration and the most expert in diplomacy and politics. This was the primary reason why and how idol-worship raised its head and why it looks strong even today; we shall write about it in detail, God willing, somewhere else.

Social institution with all its manifestations (family as well as other groupings) has always existed with mankind since the dawn of humanity. But man was not consciously aware of it in the beginning. It was there growing with man's other natural instincts and characteristics like exploitation, self-defence and things like that.

The Qur'an informs us that it was the institution of prophethood which made the man aware of society and social bonds in detail and exhorted him to preserve and protect it as a distinct factor of humanity. God says: *And mankind was naught but a single people, then they differed* [10:19]. Also He says: *Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed* [2:213]. It shows that mankind in its earliest days was one nation, simple and not complicated; there was no difference among them. Then differences occurred and disputes appeared; so God sent the

prophets and revealed the books to them in order that it might remove the said disputes and differences, and bring them back to social accord and unity which in its turn would be protected through ordained laws.

Again God says: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, that establish the religion and be not divided therein* [42:13]. This verse too informs us that it was the call to establish the religion without being divided therein which removed the discord among the people and united them on one word. Thus, it was religion that had guaranteed the safety of their good social order.

As you see, the verse attributes this call (of society's good and unity) to Noah who was the first prophet to be given a law and a book; then it ascribes it to Abraham, then to Moses, then to Jesus (peace be on them all). The shariah of Noah and Abraham contained very small amount of rules and regulations. Of the four prophets, the most elaborate was the shariah of Moses, which was followed by Jesus—as the Qur'an says and the Gospels show—but the shariah of Moses contains only about six hundred rules, as has been reported.

In any case, the call to live in a society—a distinct and clear call—was not given except by the prophets in the mould of religion, as the Qur'an clearly says and—as will be seen—the history confirms.

3. Islam and the Attention it gives to Society

Undoubtedly, Islam is the only religion which has purposely laid its foundation on human society, on community life. It has never neglected the social aspects in any of its affairs. If you want to know more, then look at the mass and volume of human actions and activities (which imagination cannot fully grasp) and their branching into various categories, classes and orders and you will be really astonished to see how this divine shariah covers all those actions and activities, and gives direction for every conceivable situation. Then see how it has moulded all those rules and regulations in the mould of social life. Then you will realize how it has filled it with the spirit of communal life to the maximum limit.

Then compare your findings with every divine shariah to which the Qur'an has given any importance, that is, the shariah of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus; and you will realize that those laws cannot bear comparison with Islam, they cannot stand at its side.

As for those systems which the Qur'an does not think worthy of

consideration—like idolatry, Sabi'ism, Manichaeism, dualism, etc.—the difference is too clear to need description.

As for the groups and nations—be they civilized or otherwise—the history only says that they used to follow what they had inherited from ancient times—that social life gave rise to exploitation and people were united under autocratic or monarchic rules; tribal, national and regional societies lived under the domain of a king or chief, whose selection was governed by factors of heredity, place of origin and things like that. No nation was paid any particular attention in its affairs; no discussion was held or views exchanged to better their condition. Even the great nations which dominated the known world at the time when the divine religion illuminated the earth—that is, the Roman and Persian empires—were nothing more than autocratic and despotic rules of Caesar and Khusraw; subject nation were "united" under the banner of the king or emperor; and the society progressed if the empire developed; otherwise it regressed.

Of course, they had inherited some treatises on sociology, among the writings of their philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others. But they were just papers which were never acted upon, merely mental images which never took shape outside imagination. The history that has come to us is the most reliable witness of what we have said.

Therefore, the first call that reached the human ear and invited this species to pay attention to the society's affairs—by making it an independent subject, taking it out from oblivion and insignificance—was the voice of the Prophet of Islam (on whom be the best blessings and peace). He invited the people, through the divine messages revealed to him, towards happy life and good living—all together. God says:

And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together, and be not divided, … And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong. [Here God draws men's attention to protect the society from division and disunity.] *and these it is that shall be successful. And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidences had come to them* [3:103–105];

And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His way [6:153];

Surely they who divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them [6:159].

There are many other unrestricted verses which call the people to live together in society.

Also, God says:

The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren [49:10];

… and do not quarrel, for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart [8:46];

… and help one another in goodness and piety … [5:2];

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong [3:104].

There are many such verses that exhort the Muslims to build the Islamic society on the foundation of unity and harmony acquiring and protecting its spiritual and material benefits and distinction—as we shall later describe in short.

4. Relationship of Individual and Society in the Eyes of Islam

While manufacturing or inventing something, one first makes its elementary parts, each part has its own properties and effects. Then one joins them together—in spite of their separate identities—and obtains from the whole new benefits in addition to the sum total of the various parts' benefits. Man, for example, has parts, limbs, organs and powers, each of which has distinct material and spiritual benefits. Sometimes they are compounded, and are thus strengthened and enhanced, like the weight of each part and that of the whole, or its power and turning from one direction to the other, etc. At other times the parts do not combine but continue as separate entities like the powers of hearing, seeing, tasting, will and movement; yet all these different parts are jointly placed under the control of one being, that is, man. Then the benefit of the whole collection far exceeds the sum total of those found separately in various parts; they are immense benefits, like action and reaction, as well as the spiritual and physical uses. One of the benefits is the presence of this astonishing plurality within the framework of unity itself. When the human matter, that is, the sperm and ovum completes its growth, it gets the power to separate a part from itself and bring it up as another perfect man, able to do all the spiritual and material activities the former man used to do. All human beings in spite of their vast number are a human being, that is, one; and their activities although plentiful in number are one in species; they are capable of uniting and joining. It is not unlike water when put in various pots is called many [units of] water, but it is in fact one species;

it has many properties but under one species; and the more water you gather in one place the more powerful are its characteristics and the far greater its impact.

Islam, in bringing up the individuals of this species and guiding them to their real happiness, looks at this real import of humanity; it could not do otherwise. God says:

And He it is Who has created man from the water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage relationship [25:54]; *O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female* [49:13]; *the one of you being from the other* [3:195].

This real relationship between individual and society inevitably leads to another actuality in the society inasmuch as people individually feed it with their existence and powers, specialities and characteristics; thus the society itself—like its members—acquires a sort of independent entity and characteristics, and it is a fact known to and seen by every one. That is why the Qur'an considers a nation as having an existence with an appointed term of its own; accordingly every nation has got a book; it has a perception and an understanding; it acts and obeys or disobeys God.

God says:

And for every nation there is an (appointed) term, so when their term is come they shall not remain behind (even) an hour, nor shall they go before [7:34];

… every nation shall be called to its book … [45:28];

Thus have We made fair-seeming to every people their deeds … [6:108];

… there is a group of them keeping to the moderate course … [5:66];

… there is an upright party; they recite Allah's communications … [3:113];

… and every nation purposes against their apostle to destroy him, and they disputed by means of the falsehood that they might thereby render null the truth, therefore I destroyed them; how was then My retribution! [40:5];

And every nation had a messenger; so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly [10:47].

That is why you see that the Qur'an pays attention to histories of nations as much as it does to individuals' stories—or even more. It did so at a time when the history was only a record of achievements or failures of kings and nobles. It was long after the revelation of the Qur'an that the historians deigned to concern themselves with the histories of nations and

societies. A few of them like al-Masʿūdī and Ibn Khaldūn wrote on this line to a certain extent, until the changes were lately affected in narrative history and individuals gave way to the nations.

Reportedly, the first [Westerner] to lay the foundation of the new history was a Frenchman, August Kent (d. 1857 C.E.).

However, as we have said above, society's power and characteristics are necessarily stronger than those of an individual. In case of conflict or discord between the two, the former must overwhelm the latter. Perception and experience are best witnesses for this phenomenon—in active as well as passive powers and traits all together. A group's will in any matter, example—in crowds and mobs, cannot be restrained by any individual's contrary will or opposite intention. A part cannot escape from following the whole—it must proceed as the whole does. So much so that the whole suspends the individual member's perception and thinking. The same is the effect of general terror and common fright as, for example, at times of retreat, during riots and disorder, in aftermath of earthquake, in periods of famine or epidemic. Even some less frightening things have the same effect; for example, traditional rites or national attires and things like that, which an individual feels himself obliged to follow—they deprive him of his thinking power or perception.

It is for this reason that Islam has paid so much attention to the affairs of society. We do not find—and cannot find—such care and attention given to it in any other religion, nor in any civilized nation. (Probably you will find it difficult to accept!) The fact is that although the individual is the foundation of society, giving only an individual a good upbringing and training him to be of virtuous character can hardly produce desired effect if the society is permeated with opposite atmosphere and environment. Only a negligible number can withstand such pressure and preserve their good character.

Thus Islam has built its most important rules and laws—like *ḥajj,* prayer, *jihād*, spending in the way of God, and in short, the religious piety—on the foundation of social life. And how did it arrange to preserve it? Apart from the authority of Islamic government (which is responsible to protect the general religious ceremonies and their boundaries), and in addition to the obligation of inviting to good, enjoining virtue and forbidding evil (which is a common obligation for the whole *ummah*), it has prescribed an important goal for the Islamic society—and no society can survive without a common goal—and that is the true happiness and

nearness to God and honor in His presence. This goal is an unseen but vigilant supervisor, from which even secret thought of man cannot remain hidden—let alone the manifest action—although the preachers and those engaged in enjoining good and forbidding evil may fail to see it. It is this reality which led us to declare that the care and concern shown by Islam to the affairs of its society excels all systems and cultures.

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5. Is Islamic social System capable of Implementation and Continuation?

Someone may say:

"You claim that Islamic ideology for creating good society is the strongest in foundation and loftiest in structure, and even the societies evolved by the advanced and civilized nations cannot reach its standard. Well, if it is so, then how is it that it could not be implemented except for a very short period, and then it changed into blatant despotic rule? Did it not turn into an imperialism more atrocious and horrid than all that had preceded it? Compare it with the Western civilization that is so enduring. "This in itself is a proof that their civilization is more advanced and their culture and tradition more vital and sound. They have laid the foundation of their social order and legal system on the people's will and their natural inclination. They give credence to the will and resolve of the majority, because usually it is impossible for the whole community to achieve unanimity on any matter; and dominance of majority is a perpetual natural phenomenon. We find that every natural cause and physical source succeeds in bringing about the effect in majority of the cases—not always. The same thing happens when diverse and conflicting causes act on one thing—only the majority succeeds in affecting the object, neither all causes nor the minority has any effect. Therefore, it is proper that the structure of social order be built on the majority's will, and it should apply to the goal of the society as well as to the systems and laws enforced therein. As for the hypothesis of religion, in the present world it is nothing but a wishful thinking that does not pass the stage of theory, an intellectual ideal that cannot be put into practice. The modern civilization, in the countries where it has taken root, guarantees the power and felicity of the society, purifies its members and cleanses them from evil traits and bad characteristics, that is, the things which the society does not approve, like falsehood, fraud, injustice, oppression, rudeness and things like that."

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The above contains a gist of what preoccupies the minds of a group

of our oriental scholars, and especially some of our eminent sociologists and psychologists. Unfortunately they have taken a wrong way to approach the subject, and it has caused confusion in their minds, as will be seen from the following explanation:

They have said: The Islamic social order—unlike the modern civilization—cannot be implemented in the world in its present environment; it means that the situation prevalent in today's world is not propitious for the laws legislated by Islam.

Comment: Agreed. But it does notprove anything. Every system now prevalent in various human societies came into being after it was not there; it appeared when the then prevalent conditions and surroundings were against it; then it stood up and struggled against the previously deep-rooted system. Often it was repulsed and defeated in the first attempt; then it rose again and again until finally it gained upper-hand, triumphed and got dominance over the society. Sometime it perished and became extinct if the conditions and factors were not favorable. History testifies to it regarding every religious and temporal system, not excepting democracy and communism.[1] It is such instances that the divine words point to: *Indeed there have been example* [lit., systems] *before you; therefore travel in the earth and see what was the end of the rejecters* [3:137]. The verse implies that the systems accompanied by rejection of divine commands do not have a happy ending, do not take one to a desirable goal.

Therefore, merely the fact that a system is not agreeable to, or goes against the current social environment does not prove that it is wrong or erroneous. In fact, this is a well-established natural phenomenon through which every new idea and event reaches its final goal, after various actions

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1 Here is one of the clearest examples: After the World War I, the system of democracy (and today it is considered the only acceptable system in the world) changed in Russia to the Communism and the Socialist system of government. After the World War II, the countries of Eastern Europe and China followed suit. Thus almost half of human populace was lost to the democracy. Then about one year ago [that is, in 1956. Trans.] it was announced in the Communists' Congress that their late leader, Stalin, during his reign extending to nearly 30 years after Lenin's death, had turned the socialist rule into autocratic despotic reign of terror. Even now a group starts believing in Stalin after disbelieving, while another disbelieves in him after believing! This up and down continues. We may find many such examples in the pages of history. (Auth.)

and reactions, as a result of interaction of diverse causes and factors.

Islam is not exception to this principle; it, like all other systems is governed by the same physical and social factors in its progress or retrogress, and is influenced by the same agencies and conditions. Islam's position today—when it has captured the hearts of more than four hundred million people[1]—is not weaker than it was in the days of Noah, Abraham or Muḥammad. Each of them began his call alone, while the world in their times knew nothing except disorder and depravity. Then their message spread, took roots and became a living phenomenon that continues up to these days of ours.

The Messenger of God began his mission while there was none to support him except a man and a woman[2]; later people joined them one after another; the days were full of privation—and what a privation it was! Then came to them the help from God and they established a good social order; a society whose members were—for a major part—governed by goodness and piety; until after the Messenger of God the strife and intrigues did to the Islamic society what they did.

It did not take long for even such a small model of Islamic social order, in spite of its short life and narrow range, to spread itself, in less than fifty years, from one corner of the Earth to the other; it turned the history of mankind to a new direction, and brought a fundamental and substantial change in it, whose overwhelming effects are seen even today and will continue to do so for ever.

Sociological and psychological discourses within the framework of ideological history cannot escape from admitting that the immediate and sufficient cause of the world's contemporary advancement is none other than the Islamic civilization and the light it spread over the Earth. Of course, most of the European scholars have neglected to give Islam its due credit, for which we may thank either religious prejudice or political expediency. How can a knowledgeable research scholar, looking at modem civic and social progress, say with justice that it was a contribution of Christianity? How can Christ be counted as its leader and standard-bearer,

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1 At the time of compiling this second edition, there are more than 1.8 billion Muslims in the world today. Islam continues to be the fastest growing religion in the world. (Pub.)

2 That is, ʿAlī and Khadījah. (Trans.)

when he himself clearly says[1] that he was concerned only with spiritual affairs and had nothing to do with body or its affairs, and did not care about governmental and political affairs? While Islam clearly invites towards social life and mutual cooperation, and guides about and manages all aspects of human society and its members without exception. Why do the Westerners shut their eyes from this manifest reality? To what should we ascribe this silence of theirs, if not to their desire to extinguish the light of Islam (while God refuses but to perfect His light) and to put out its flame from the hearts by their envy and enmity—so that they could present Islam as a nation which has left no imprint on modem civilization?

However, Islam has proved its ability to guide the mankind to their happiness and their good lives. Such a phenomenon cannot be dismissed as a hypothesis inapplicable to human life. Nor can it lose hope of one day dominating the world (inasmuch as its objective is the mankind's true happiness). We have already mentioned[2] in the Commentary of the verse, *Mankind was but one people* [2:213], that deep research in the conditions of creation leads us to the conclusion that the human species will surely reach its destination and achieve its goal—and it means the total domination of true Islam over the world, its complete authority over the social order. God has promised, according to this very principle, in His Mighty Book: *… then Allah will bring a people that He shall love Him, humble before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer …* [5:54]; *Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them successors in the earth as He made successors those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall worship Me, not associating aught with Me* [24:55]; *that the earth, shall inherit it My righteous servants* [21:105].

There is another dimension to this question which these people are totally oblivious of. The motto of Islamic social system is to follow the truth in theory and practice; while the ideal of today's civilization is to follow the views and desires of the majority. This basic difference in outlook has resulted in difference in the aims and goals of the respective societies. The goal of Islamic society is the real and rational happiness and felicity. It

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 6. (Trans.)

2 *ibid.* vol. 3 (Trans.)

means that man should practise moderation in giving his various powers their demands; he gives to his body what it desires but to the extent that it does not hinder him from knowing God through the path of servitude; rather it becomes a means of reaching that destination. In this way, man attains happiness through the happiness of all his powers and faculties. It is the greatest Comfort (although today we do not fully perceive it because we lack the proper Islamic training). That is why Islam has laid the foundation of its commandments on wisdom and intellect which by its nature follows the truth and reality; and it has very strongly prohibited all that disturbs the healthy intellect. It has laid the responsibility of enforcing all activities, moral and basic gnosis on the shoulders of the society. It is in addition to what the Islamic government is expected to do, like enforcing the penal code, etc. This aspect in any case would not be palatable to the general public. Such ideal would be intolerable to those who are astonishingly immersed in their desires and lusts—as we see today in all classes of society, be they affluent or hard pressed. Islamic system based on wisdom and intellect curbs people's freedom of enjoying whatever pleasure they like, whatever entertainment they desire, of attacking or devouring whom they are angry with. Naturally people would not like such restrictions, such limitations, except after intense efforts and tireless endeavours for spreading the message, and after intensive and extensive training given to the people; it is not different from other development affairs in which man needs firm determination, sufficient training and never ending vigilance.

On the other hand, the goal of the modern civilization is material enjoyment. Obviously it encourages a sensual life that follows the heart's desire—no matter whether it conforms with rational truth or not. It follows intellect only when it does not go against its desires or ambitions.

That is why today's law follows, in its legislation and implementation, the pleasure of the majority of society and the desire of their hearts. Apart from that, only those laws that are concerned with overt actions may be guaranteed to be implemented. But as far as ethics and fundamental gnosis are concerned, there is no way of enforcing them; people are at liberty to adopt or reject them—except when these factors go against the law of the land, as then they are expressly forbidden.

Consequently, such a society would be wont to do what falls in line with its desire like base lust and inordinate rage. Such people would prefer most of the things condemned by religion; they would take good morals and high spiritual knowledge as mockery, shielding themselves behind

"constitutional freedom."

As a result of this phenomenon the ideology is bound to change its course from rational to sensual. What the wisdom treats as immorality and depravity, is glorified by sensual outlook as chivalry, manhood and good manners. Look at what is happening in Europe between the youths, between men and married or unmarried women, between women and dogs, and between men and their own daughters or other women within prohibited degrees; look at what is done in festivities and dance parties, etc.—the things which a person brought up in religious atmosphere feels ashamed even to bring on his tongue.

Sometimes religious rites appear in these people's eyes as odd curiosities and laughing matters—and vice versa. This is because the thinking and perceptions are completely different in their essence as well as in modality. These social orders based on sensuality take no benefit from intellect—as you have seen—except for paving the way for sensual enjoyment. This enjoyment is their only goal; nothing is allowed to oppose it, nothing can stand in its way—except when one has to choose between two enjoyments of equal degree. After all there were—and still are—among the legislated laws things like suicide and duel, etc. One gets what he wants and desires except when it is in conflict with the will and desire of the society.

Ponder on this difference; then you will understand why the western social order—unlike the religious one—seems more agreeable to the human society. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that it is not only the present day's western social order that has proved consistent with people's nature (so that it may be given preference over other civilizations for this reason); all the social systems which were or are found in any society, from the early dawn of humanity to this day of ours, right from roaming nomads to the flourishing settlements, had and have one thing in common: People give preference to them over the religion that invites them to reality and truth; it is their first reaction when they are called to the true religion—because they are enthralled by material idolatry.

If you ponder deeply you will find that the modern civilization is nothing more than a collection of various customs of early idolatry; but it has "progressed" from individual to collective level, from the stage of simple rites to that of technical finesse.

What we have said—that the Islamic social order is based on following the truth and reality, not on conformity with hearts' desires—is amongst the clearest declarations of the Qur'an. God says:

He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth … [9:33];

And Allah judges with the truth [40:20];

(Also He says commending the believers) … and enjoin on each other truth … [103:3];

Certainly We have brought you the truth, but most of you are averse to the truth [43:78].

Here it is clearly stated that truth is not agreeable to the majority and their desires. Then God totally rejects the idea that the majority's will should be followed. Why this rejection? Because it results in depravity and destruction. God says: *Nay ! he has brought them the truth, and most of them are averse from the truth. And should the truth follow their desires, surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have perished. Nay! We have brought to them their reminder, but from their reminder they turn aside* [23:70–71].

Have a bird's-eye view of the world history; see the man made calamities taking shape one after another; chaos and disaster, depravity and iniquity piling up one over another. Then you will appreciate how true the divine words have proved. God again says: *… and what is there after the truth but error, how are you then turned back?* [10:32]. There are many verses of this or similar theme. If you want to gain more insight then study Chapter 10, Jonah, where "the truth" [and its derivatives] have been mentioned more than twenty times.

They have said: To follow the majority is a regular trait of the nature.

Comment: No doubt that the nature follows its major effects; but it never nullifies or contradicts the obligation of following the truth and reality. Nature itself is a truth. How can it negate its own self?

For proper understanding of this statement, a few premises should be explained here:

First: The external things and affairs, which are found outside man's imagination, are the basis of his cognitive beliefs and practical ideas; in their genesis and development, they depend on the system of causality—a permanent and all-encompassing system that allows no exception. All knowledgeable thinkers are unanimously agreed on this fact, and the Qur'an too testifies to its truth as we have described earlier[1]. Such external happenings appear and continue without fail [following their sufficient

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 1, on "Miracle" (Trans.)

cause]. Even the effects appearing in majority of cases are—from the point of reason—permanent in their sense of majority. For example, fire that—looking at all its uses—brings heat most of the times, its "heat-giving in majority of cases" is its permanent property. Likewise there are other examples; and this is the truth.

Second: Man by nature follows what he finds in any way a real external thing or affair. He follows the truth by dictate of nature. Even those [agnostics] who deny definite knowledge, if you tell one of them something which he has no doubt about, he will surely accept it.

Third: Truth, as you have seen, is an external thing which man accepts in belief and follows in deeds. Man's own views or perceptions are just a means to reach that external truth—as mirror is a means to see the image.

Now that you have understood these premises, it should be clear to you that truth or reality, that is, something occuring in nature, in all or majority of the cases, is an attribute of an external thing that exists outside imagination and happens always or in most of the cases; but it is not knowledge or perception. In other words, truth is an attribute of a thing that is known, not of the knowledge itself and that thing always occurs or in majority of cases, is in a way the truth. But the view of the majority of the people, or their aspiration or belief, vis-a-vis, that of the minority, is not always truth. It may be truth—when it conforms with reality; or it may be falsehood if it does not. In the latter case, man should not submit to it; nor would he do so if he became aware of its falsity. When you were sure of a thing and then all the people said you were wrong, you would not accept their view; and even if you made a show of submitting to them, you would do so only out of fear, embarrassment or some other factor—but not because you believed their view to be correct. The following verse is one of the best statements to show that the majority's views and opinions were not necessarily truth that must be followed: *Nay! he has brought them the truth, and most of them are averse from the truth* [23:70]. If every opinion of the majority were the truth, they would not have been averse or opposed to it.

The above discourse shows clearly the untenability of the argument that to follow the majority is the dictate of the nature. This natural system applies to external happenings and things—which are subject of knowledge—not to the knowledge or thought itself. According to this principle, man should follow in his intention and action that which happens—externally—most of the times; not that he should follow what a majority of

the people believes. In other words, his activities and actions should be based on the good of the majority; and it is the principle upon which the Qur'an has based its legislations and ordinations. God says: *Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favor on you, so that you may be grateful* [5:6]; *… fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard (against evil)* [2:183]. There are many other verses that describe the underlying reasons of given orders which are found in most of the cases.

They have said: The modern civilization has provided the developed countries with society's happiness, has refined its members and purified them from evil characteristics which are disapproved by the community.

Comment: This talk is not free of confusion and medley. Probably when they say "society's happiness", they mean its superiority in technology and power, its exploitation—to the maximum—of natural resources. But you have repeatedly seen that Islam does not count it as happiness and felicity. Rational arguments too support this principle.

Mankind's happiness is in fact a combination of the felicity of the spirit and that of the body. This bestows on man the material bounties, and at the same time adorns him with excellent character and true divine gnosis. It is the felicity that guarantees to him his happiness in this life and in the hereafter. If one submerges oneself in material enjoyments and ignores spiritual felicity, then it is nothing but infelicity, unhappiness.

As for their marvelling at the good characteristics—like truth, sincerity, trustworthiness and fine manners, etc.—which they find in the people of advanced countries, again they are confused. The trouble is that most of our oriental scholars are unable to think in a collective framework, to look at a society as a social unit; they look at an individual as an individual, and that is that. They see a man and think that he is a being who is independent of all things and has no such connection with anything as to affect his independent existence. (But the reality is otherwise.) Also, when such a scholar thinks about his life, his only aim is to gain benefits for himself and ward off harms from himself. He is always involved in his own affairs—and it is an individualistic thinking. Then he weighs others with the same measure and decides that they too are individualistically independent.

Such judgment can be true, if at all, about that man, only whose thinking is individualistic. But it cannot be applied to a person who is

conditioned to think in the framework of society: he considers himself an inseparable part of his society, who has no existence separate from it; his benefits are a part of his society's benefits; the society's good is his good; and its harm, is his harm; every attribute and condition of the society is his own attribute and condition. Such a man thinks in an entirely different way. When it comes to establishing relations with other persons, he only concerns himself with relations outside his society; as for relations with other parts of the same society, he does not care in the least.

Let us give you an example. Man is a compound, made of numerous limbs and faculties, all of which are combined together to give them a real oneness which we call "humanity." This makes them merge their separate identities and actions in the man's independent existence. Eyes, ears, hands and feet, see, hear, attack and walk for the man; each of these organs enjoys its activity when the man enjoys it. Each of them aspires to establish contact with some separate identity whom the man wants to link with—either with good intention or bad. Eyes, ears, hands or feet want to do good or bad to him whom the man wants to do good or bad. But as for the organs' own mutual relation and contact—when all of them are under the banner of one human being—seldom does one of them [cause] any harm to any other, nor is any of them discomforted by any other.

This is then the condition of the parts of a man, and theirs is one unified collective progress. The same is the position of individual members of a human society when their thinking is moulded in collective mould. Their good or evil, piety or depravity, benevolence or malevolence are one with those of the society when looked at as one single identity.

The Qur'an has done the same when it has judged various nations and groups whose thinking, because of their religious or national prejudice, was moulded in collective mould, like the Jews, the Arabs, and a number of ancient nations. Thus, you will find it censuring the present generations for the sins of their progenitors, blaming the contemporary groups for the misdeeds of their predecessors. All this because it is a fair and true judgment regarding those who think in a collective way. The honored Qur'an has so many verses of this theme that it is not even necessary to quote them.

Of course, justice demands that if there be some good people in that same society, their due rights should not be suppressed. Although they live in that corrupted social order and mingle with their compatriots, their hearts are not polluted by their society's evil thinking and widespread

inner sickness. They are in it but—like extra limbs—are not a part of it. The Qur'an has taken the same view when, in middle of general censure, it excepts good and righteous persons.

It is clear from the above description that while deciding about the goodness or badness of the members of advanced civilized societies—in contrast to those of other nations—one should not see as to how they live with one another, how they deal with their compatriots, how in short is their internal life. Rather, one should look at their collective personality as it shows itself when they deal with other weaker nations, as they behave with other collective societies of the world. It is this criterion that should be kept in mind when one wants to judge the worth of a society—its goodness or badness, its felicity or infelicity. It is from this angle that our scholars should approach the subject. After that they are at liberty either to admire that social order or to be scandalized by it.

By my life, if a thoughtful observer looks at the history of their collective life since the European renaissance, and ponders on what they have done to other poor helpless nations and tribes, he will at once realize that these people (who supposedly are full of mercy and sincerity for mankind; who serve the humanity with their lives and properties; who have bestowed freedom and given helping hand to oppressed and suppressed nations; and who have abolished slavery and bondage) have no other goal except subjugating the weak and poor nations as long as they can, by any method at hand. One day it is done through military campaign, another day by colonial intrigues; some day it is by outright annexation, on other occasions in the guise of suzerainty; one day they establish themselves in the name of guarding the joint interests, another day on the pretext of helping to preserve the independence; sometimes they establish foothold in the name of peace-keeping or repulsing a danger, at other times to defend the rights of deprived and dislodged groups; and so on and so forth.

Healthy human nature does not agree to treat such societies as good ones, nor to praise them as happy ones—even if we shut our eyes from the meaning given to happiness by religion, revelation and prophethood.

How can human nature agree to this paradox? It equips all its members equally with all faculties; then how can it contradict its own decision and give some men a charter to own the others? What kind of ownership that gives the "owners" authority on lives, honor and properties of the "subjects", and paves the way for them to play with their (the subjects') lives

and existence, to control their perception and will? And all this savagery to a degree not seen or experienced even by primitive men? For reference you should study the history of these nations and have a look at what the present generation is suffering on their hands. If such a situation is called happiness and goodness, it could only be in an ironical and sarcastic sense.

6. What is the Basis of Islamic Society? How it lives on?

Society—of any type—comes into being when a common goal and ambition unites its individual members. That goal is a single spirit spread throughout the society that makes it one entity. In non-religious societies that goal is man's worldly life seen collectively—not individualistically that is collective enjoyment of the advantages of physical life.

What is the difference—in characteristics—between collective and individualistic enjoyments? If man is able to live alone, he will be unhindered, unrestricted, in all his enjoyments; there will be nothing to oppose or prevent him. The only restriction will come from the limitations put by his own limbs. For example, he cannot breath in all the air in atmosphere—even if he wants to—because his lungs are not so big; he cannot take the food except to a certain amount, because his digestive system would not tolerate it. The same applies to other faculties and limbs that restrict each other's activities. But, as we have supposed that there was no other human being to demand share in exploitation of natural resources and benefits, there would be nothing to put restriction on his activities or to hinder him in his desires and actions.

But the position is different for a man living in a society. If he were to act without any restraint, with a will of his own, it would create friction and collision, life would become intolerable and the mankind would perish. (We have fully described it under the discourse of Prophethood.[1])

That is the only reason that leads people to the rule of law in society. But uncivilized societies do not consciously realize its need; they just follow their customs and traditions which in their turn give rise to discord and quarrel among the members; thus all of them feel obliged to observe some rules that could give some protection to the society. As those laws are not based on a solid foundation, they are liable to imperfection and nullification, alteration and invalidation.

On the other hand, civilized societies base their laws on solid

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 3. (Trans.)

foundation—according to their degree of progress and advancement. Through those laws they remove the discord and difference appearing in the society's intentions and activities, inasmuch as they put some restrictions and limits on them. Then they concentrate on the power and authority in a centre which is given responsibility to enforce the law and implement its provisions. It appears from the above that:

First: Law, in fact, is the factor that moderates people's desires and actions, by putting limitations on them and thus removing the sources of discord and difference.

Second: The society governed by law allows its members complete freedom in matters not covered by the law; and it is as it should be, because man has been equipped with perception and will, and once these factors are moderated, further restriction is uncalled for. That is why modern laws do not care about divine knowledge or ethics. Consequently, these two important things appear to the people in the shape given to them by the nature of law. They have to compromise and conform with the law—as its dependent. Thus sooner or later they turn into external rituals devoid of inner purity. Also, it is for this reason that we see the politics playing with the religion: one day it (politics) decides against religion and makes it illegal; another day it relies on it and goes to the extreme to keep its banner aloft; a third day leaves it alone in benign neglect.

Third: This system is not free from defect. Although the society has given an individual or some individuals responsibility to enforce the law, yet ultimately there is no guarantee that it would be enforced. If the person who has final power and authority deviates from truth, and changes the collective power into personal hold; and ignores or nullifies the law to establish his own rule over mankind, then there will be nothing to subdue this despot or to bring him back to the path of justice. There are countless examples of this phenomenon even in this time of ours, this age of culture and civilization—let alone the historical proofs of earlier days.

Add to this defect another shortcoming: Many is a time when the executive authority remains completely unaware that a law had been broken. Or, the criminal manages to go out of its jurisdiction.

Now, we come back to our original topic: A society is held together by a single shared goal, that is, enjoyment of this worldly life's advantages. It is what general public calls happiness. But from Islam's point of view, human life has a much wider circle than this worldly life—it encompasses also the life hereafter which is the real life. Islam knows that nothing will be of

any use in that next life except divine gnosis—all of which is concentrated in monotheism. Also it realizes that this knowledge cannot be preserved or protected except through noble moral values and by purifying the self from all base traits. It recognizes that these meritorious characteristics cannot be completed and perfected unless man lives in a healthy society which relies on divine worship, which submits to the demands of God's Lordship, and wherein each member deals with all others according to social justice. In short, from Islamic point of view, the unifying goal on which human society is based is the religion of monotheism; it has the same principle of monotheism. It has not stopped—in this legislation—at merely moderating the intentions and actions; rather it has completed it with the acts of worship and added to it true divine knowledge and noble moral traits.

Thereafter, it gave the responsibility of its enforcement first to the Islamic government and then to the whole society. The latter would do it through good training in knowledge and practice and by enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

One of the most important aspects of this religion is the fact that all its parts, all its components, are so well-knit together that the whole constitutes one perfect unit: The spirit of monotheism permeates all the virtuous characteristics and ethics which this religion invites to; and the spirit of good character is spread throughout the deeds which the society members are obligated to perform. Thus all the components of Islamic religion, in final analysis, return to monotheism; and monotheism on exoteric level becomes noble ethics and good deeds. When monotheism comes down, it becomes ethics and deeds; and when they ascend, they become monotheism. *To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up* [35:10].

Question: The objection laid down against civil laws (when, for example, the executive authority refuses to implement them or fails to detect the law-breakers) may also be brought against Islam with equal force. Its clearest proof may be seen in the present condition of Islam, when it has become so enervated that it has lost all its grip over the society. The reason here too is the same: There is no one who could enforce its tenets among the people—even for a day.

Reply: What is the reality of law in general, be they divine or man-made? They are only imaginative forms in people's minds, some cognition retained in hearts. It is by appropriate human will that they are

implemented and thus perceived and observed. Obviously, if the will is lacking, nothing can be found to apply the laws to. The same is the case of those factors which maintain the relation of this will with the law's enforcement—in order to preserve and strengthen the law. However, secular laws are concerned with no more than connecting the actions with intentions of the majority; but they do not care to arrange for preservation of that intention. As long as the intention is alive, perceptive and active, the law is implemented. But if that will die (because of deterioration in the people's spirit, or decrepitude eating away the society's structure); or if it was alive but was bereft of perception and cognition (because the society was submerged in vain distractions, or inordinately involved in luxuries and material enjoyments); or even if it was alive and perceptive but became ineffective (because some other stronger power imposed its own will over that of the majority); in all these situations the nation would not attain its ambition of enforcing the law and protecting the society from destruction and annihilation. The same would be the case in the events like secret crimes which the executive could not detect; or which it cannot deal with—like the events occurring outside its jurisdiction. The discords and splits appearing within European nations after the World Wars I and II give a clear picture of this syndrome.

This breakdown of laws and destruction of society occurs only because society does not care to establish the real factor that preserves the nation's will and keeps it strong and dominant—and it is the high morality, the noble character. The nation's will, in its survival and continuation of existence, gets support from relevant characteristics only as is explained in psychology. If the nation's traditions and applied laws are not based on sound foundation of high morality, they would be like an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface, that has no stability.

Ponder, for example, on the appearance of communism. It is but a natural child of democracy; it came into being because some classes of the society were extremely opulent while the others were totally deprived. There was a huge distance between the two extremes; on one side was cruelty and oppression, on the other was growing impatience and accumulated hatred and rage. The same happened in the World Wars, coming one after the other, and the third is waiting on the side to pounce on humanity any moment. It has undermined the earth and destroyed the tilth and the stock; and it did not, and does not, have any reason except the "civilized and advanced" nations' arrogance mischief and greed.

On the other hand, Islam has laid the foundation of its traditions and laws on morality and has put utmost efforts in training the people in noble character, in order that it may ensure that the laws shall be enforced practically. This noble moral character is with the man in secret and in open, in private and in public; it does its duty and discharges its responsibility—far better than any guarding police, more effectively than any other authority that engages itself in maintaining the law and order.

Of course, the educational institutions in these countries try to train the people in meritorious characteristics, and vigorously exhort the people to it. But it proves of no use.

First: The only fountain-head of evil traits is extravagance and inordinate material enjoyment on one side and extreme deprivation on the other. The civil laws have given the people unrestricted freedom in this respect; it has provided one class with all privileges and left the others destitute. In this background, is not the call to sublime morality a call to two mutually contradictory things? An attempt to join two opposites?

Moreover, as you have seen, these nations have adopted a collective thinking. Their societies even today endeavour their utmost to oppress weaker societies and trample on their rights; they exploit these poor nations' resources, subjugate their people, and dictate their own decisions to them to the utmost possible extent. What is this call to goodness and piety—with these characteristics? Is it not a self-contradicting call that could bring no result?

Second: Even sublime morality needs—for its continuation and preservation—a guarantor to protect it and keep it alive; and there can be no guarantee for it other than monotheism, that is, the belief that there is one God for the universe, Who has beautiful names; He has created the creatures in order that they should attain to their perfection and happiness; He loves good and virtue, and dislikes evil and mischief; He will surely gather all for deciding between them and awarding them their recompense; thus He will reward the good-doer for his good deeds and punish the evil-doer for his evil [deeds].

Obviously, if you remove the belief in the Day of Judgment, there would be no genuine reason why one should not follow one's desires, why should one desist from material enjoyments and physical lust. The human nature wants and demands what a man himself desires, not what would benefit someone else—except when the other person's desire somehow becomes this man's. (Think over it properly.)

Suppose a man desires something that he cannot obtain without trampling on someone else's rights. There is nothing to restrain him, no judge to punish him, no censurer to censure him and no reprover to reprove him. Now, what hindrance is there to stop him from committing the crime and perpetrating the injustice, no matter how serious and heinous it might be? As for some imaginary restraints (and often scholars are misled in this matter!), like patriotism, love of humanity, exalted commendations or things like that, they are merely the heart's inclinations and inner feelings; there is nothing to sustain them except education and training—and that too is not based on any solid reason. Thus these things are just conventional attributes and common occurrences; there is no guarantor to prevent their obliteration. Why should a man sacrifice his life in order that someone else might live after him, when he believes that death is complete annihilation and total extinction? As for the exaltation and praise, it depends on others' tongues; and how can he enjoy it after he has sacrificed himself and become "nothing"?

In short, no thinking person can deny that man would never opt for a deprivation whose recompense would not reach him, whose benefit would go to someone else. As for the promise in such situations that his good memory would remain alive for ever and he would "enjoy" eternal wonderful praise, it is just a deceit and delusion in which he allows himself to be entrapped. It is self-delusion that lets him think that even after death and extinction his condition would be the same as before death; that he would know about and enjoy the good things told about him after his death. But surely it is nothing except self-deception, a fantasy of imagination. His condition is not unlike a drunk man driven by his emotions; he pardons his enemies, offers his life and honor, wealth and prestige, for causes which he would never approve of, if he were in his senses; but he is drunk and unable to understand, and therefore thinks that it is heroism—while in fact it is nothing but foolishness, madness.

Man cannot safeguard against this or other such misjudgments and blunders except through belief in monotheism mentioned above. That is why Islam has built the noble character (which is an integral part of its ordained laws) on the foundation of monotheism—a concomitant of which is the belief in the Day of Judgment. If a man believed in these realities, he would feel bound to do good and abstain from evil, wherever and in whatever situation he might be, whether anybody knew of his action or not, whether anyone praised him or not, whether or not there

were someone to exhort him to do it or not to do it. He would know that God was with him, the Knower, the Preserver, Who watched what every soul was doing; he would also know that later on, a day was coming when every soul should find present what it had done of good and what it had done of evil, and in which every soul would be given recompense of what it had earned.

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7. Two Logics: Logic of Understanding and Logic of Sensuousness

The logic of sensuousness calls to worldly benefits and drives one to it. If an action is profitable and man is aware of its profitability, then his senses intensely yearn to do it. If, on the other hand, he does not see any benefit in it then he remains inactive and inert.

The logic of understanding, on the other hand, motivates one to follow the truth, and believes that it is the best thing which may benefit the man, no matter it is accompanied by worldly benefit or not; because that which is with God, is better and more enduring.

To see the difference between the two logics, compare two lines of a poem of ʿAntarah (which is based on the logic of sensuousness) with a Qur'anic verse [on the same subject] based on the logic of understanding. ʿAntarah says:

> And my saying (to my soul) whenever it belched or was agitated:
> '(Stay) at your place; you shall either be praised or shall get rest.'

He wants to say: I keep my soul steadfast (whenever it is shaken in dangerous and fearsome war situations) by saying to it: Be calm and remain steadfast; if you are killed, people will praise you for your steadfastness and remaining firm in the midst of the danger; and if you kill the enemy you will be rid of him and thus get peace of mind.

Therefore, remaining steadfast is good in either case.

Check it with the divine words (based on the logic of wisdom): *Say: "Nothing will afflict us save what Allah has ordained for us; He is our Patron; and on Allah should the believers rely." Say: "Do you await for us but one of the two most excellent things? And we await for you that Allah will afflict you with punishment from Himself or by our hands. So wait; we too will wait with you."* [9:51–52].

The believers believe that it is only God Who is their Guardian and Patron; and it is entirely in the hand of God to support and help them. They do not care about whatever good or evil comes to them; they long

only for the reward which He has promised them for being submissive to Him and holding fast to His religion. As He says: *this is because there afflicts them not thirst or fatigue or hunger in Allah's way, nor do they tread a path which enrages the unbelievers, nor do they attain from the enemy what they attain, but a good work is written down to them on account of it; surely Allah does not waste the reward of the doers of good. Nor do they spend anything that may be spent; small or great, nor do they traverse a valley, but it is written down to their credit, that Allah may reward them with the best of what they have done* [9:120–121].

Accordingly they say to their enemies: If you kill us or do us any harm, we shall get great reward and good result from our Lord; and if we killed you or afflicted you with some misfortune, we shall again get great reward and good result from our Lord in addition to the victory we shall get over you in this world. In either case, we shall be happy and our position is enviable; whatever you await for us is one of the two good things, we shall be successful and happy in either case. But according to your belief, you will attain your goal and will get happiness only in one case, that is, if you were to vanquish us. We therefore await for you what would displease you, while you await for us only that which would please us, would make us happy.

These, therefore, are the two logics. One tries to build courage and steadfastness on foundation of sensuousness; it teaches that he who would stand firm in battle would get one of the two benefits: either people's admiration and praise or deliverance from enemy; and that too on the condition that there was some benefit in it for the fighter who was exposing himself to danger; if there was no benefit coming to him (example—people were not expected to applaud and acclaim him because they did not appreciate war; or did not distinguish faithful service from betrayal; or the service was of a type that they could not know about; or faithfulness and faithlessness were equal in their eyes; or his heart was not at rest by destruction of enemy) then this logic becomes totally ineffective, inoperative and useless.

The above examples cover most of the usual reasons involving injustice and wrong, fraud and crime. An embezzler, when going against the law, says: 'My services are not properly appreciated by the people; a faithful servant and a faithless one are all equal in their eyes; the faithless one enjoys rather a more pleasant life, his condition is far better than mine.' A criminal thinks that he would surely wriggle out of the clutches of law; that the supervising authorities could not catch him out; his affairs would

remain a secret and people would not be able to detect his misdeeds. One who is apathetic and sluggish in establishing the truth and rising against its enemies, and fraternizes with the forces of untruth, offers the plea that standing for truth would humiliate him in people's eyes, the modem world would laugh at him and would look down at him as a relic of the middle ages or the pre-historic times. If you talked to him about spiritual purity and moral decency, he would reply: Of what use to me shall the spiritual purity be if it leads to misery, hardship and shortened life?

On the other hand, the other logic, the Islamic one, has built its structure on following the truth and seeking the reward and recompense from God. As for the worldly aims and goals, they occupy secondary position in its scheme. It is clear that no situation in life can remain out of the above-mentioned basic and primary goal—it is all-encompassing general aim which covers all human activities. According to this logic, every action—be it an act of commission or omission—is done for the pleasure of God, in submission to His will, for following the truth which He has ordained; and He is the Guard, the Knowing that neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep; none can protect from Him, nor anything in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Him; and God is Aware of what you do.

Thus there is for every soul, in whatever it does or fails to do, an Observer, a Witness Who preserves what is done by man. It makes no difference whether the people witness in it not, admire it or not, appreciate it or not.

Islamic training had been so effective that people used to come to the Messenger of God and confess to him the sins and crimes they had done in secret, and accepted the penalty and punishment given to them (from death sentence downwards); their only motive being to seek the pleasure of God, and to cleanse their souls from the filth of sins and rust of evil.

If a scholar ponders on those events, he would understand how wonderful the effect of religious training was on the people's souls, and how it had trained them to gladly offer to God the most desired and most important things they had—that is, the life and all that it covers. If this discussion were not Qur'anic, we would have given some relevant examples from Islamic history.

8. What is the Meaning of Seeking Reward from God, and Turning away from others?

[**One may ask:**]To make the reward of the hereafter as the common and

primary goal of human social life would entail discarding this life's aims which the human nature invites to; it would destroy the social system and drive people to monasticism. After all, how could it be possible to attach oneself exclusively to one goal and at the same time preserve other important goals too? Is it not a contradictory statement?

Reply: It is an erroneous impression emanating from ignorance of divine wisdom and secrets which the Qur'an has so clearly described. Islam has based its legislation on the foundation of creation, as we have repeatedly shown in many discourses in this book. God says: *Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration (by anyone else) in the creation of Allah; that is the right religion* [30:30].

In short, the series of actual creative causes by linking together have brought the human species into being, and are driving it to its life's goal that is prescribed for it. It is therefore essential for man to develop his life in the framework of free will and struggle, according to the laid down causes to attain his goal, in order that his life does not turn into a battle between cause and goals—otherwise it would lead to destruction and annihilation. This then is the religion of Islam—if the questioner would understand it. Of course, there is one Single Cause above all the causes Who has created all causes and manages all its big and small affairs; and He is God, Who is the Complete Cause above all the causes (in the correct meaning of this word). Man is obliged to surrender to His will and submit to His command. This is what we mean when we say that monotheism is the only foundation of Islamic religion.

It is clear from the above that preserving the belief of monotheism, surrendering to God's will and seeking His pleasure throughout one's life follows entirely the system of causality by giving everyone his due right—without polytheism or heedlessness. A Muslim has some worldly goals and some of the hereafter, some material objectives and some spiritual. But he does not involve himself with material or worldly goals more than what is rationally required of him. That is why we find Islam calling to the belief of monotheism, to attach oneself exclusively to God, to have pure belief in Him turning away from every other cause, every other goal; and yet it orders the people to follow the laws of life, to proceed on the path of nature.

Again, it is obvious that it is only the members of Islamic society who are truly happy—both in this world and the next; that their objective—to

seek the pleasure of God in all activities—does not conflict with life's other objectives, provided it has the upper hand.

The above discourse removes one more misunderstanding, which has been shown by some sociologists. They think that the reality of religion and its fundamental objective is to establish social justice, and the matters related to divine worship have secondary position—they are mere shoots branching from that root. Whoever therefore establishes social justice is on religion, even if he had no belief nor did he perform any worship.

But if a scholar meditates on the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, and especially on the life history of the Prophet, he would at once see through the falsity of this "argument", without any trouble or effort. Moreover, this talk that intends to discard the belief of monotheism and noble virtues from religious tenets, actually is an attempt to change the religious objective (that is, belief of monotheism) into secular objective (that is, material enjoyment); and you have seen that these are two opposite objectives, none of them can be changed into the other—neither in roots, nor in shoots, nor in its fruits.

9. What is the Meaning of Freedom According to Islam?

The word, 'Freedom', in the sense it is used nowadays, is not older than a few centuries. Probably, its genesis dates from the Europeans renaissance a few hundred years ago. Yet, its idea was present in minds as choicest desire of hearts—since ancient times.

The creative natural basis, which this idea emanates from, is the will the man is equipped with in his existence and which gives rise to his actions; it is a psychological condition nullification of which would nullify perception and sensation, that in its turn would lead to the nullification of humanity.

But man is a social being; his nature drives him to live in a society, cooperating with others, coordinating his will and aligning his activity with the will and activities of others. This leads him to submit to a law that would regulate people's wills and actions by demarcating proper boundaries for each. The same nature that has given the man freedom of will and action, puts also limitations on that will and action and restricts that initial freedom.

As the modern civil laws have built their regulations on the foundation of material enjoyment—as you have seen—it has resulted in freedom from religion: man is free in matters of basic religious knowledge to adhere

to it or not; in moral issues (and in all things beyond the sphere of civil laws) to choose, and act on, whatever he desires. This is what the freedom means in modern times.

But as for Islam, as you know, it has based its laws on monotheism, and secondarily on noble moral values. Then it has given guidance for all types of personal and social activities, be they big or small; there is nothing related to man but the Islamic shariah has a law prescribed for it. Therefore, there is no room here for the freedom (in the above sense).

Of course, it has freed man from the fetters of serving other than God. It is a short sentence; but has a vast meaning. Its significance may be appreciated when you ponder deeply on Islamic system and the practical way of life which it guides to and which it establishes among the society's members and its various classes. Then compare it with what you see of the systems of domination, control and power found in the civilized societies, as between its own members and classes and also between a strong and a weak nation.

As for the Islamic commandments, it has given choice and freedom in all those things which Islam has made lawful of good sustenance and advantages of moderate life without inclining to either extreme. God says: *Say: "Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?"* [7:32]; *He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth* [2:29]; *And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself* [45:13].

It is really astonishing to see an exegete laboring to "prove" freedom of belief in Islam on the evidence of the verses like: *There is no compulsion in religion* [2:256]. We have explained its true significance in its Commentary in the chapter of The Cow. Here it should be added that, as you know, monotheism is the foundation of all Islamic tenets and beliefs. How is it possible, then, to allow freedom of belief? Is it not just a clear contradiction? The idea of freedom of belief has the same position in Islam as the idea of freedom from the rule of law would have in the civil laws.

Look at it from another angle. Belief (that is, attainment of affirmative knowledge firmly-rooted in mind) is not a voluntary action of man, so that it could be a subject of permission or prohibition, compulsion or freedom. What can be prohibited or permitted is the action resulting from that belief. For example, propagation of that belief, canvassing for it, writing and publishing it, undermining the opposite belief and activity

of the people—these are the things which may be allowed or forbidden. Obviously if such activities are against the laws of the land, or go against the constitution or principles on which the laws are based, then there is no alternative to prohibiting them by law. The basis of Islamic legislation is the religion of monotheism (the belief in the Oneness of God, the prophethood and the Day of Judgment); it is what is unanimously believed by all the Muslims as well as the People of the Book (that is, the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians). The Islamic freedom is confined within this limit. To claim freedom beyond this limit is tantamount to destroy the foundation of religion.

Of course, there is one more freedom, that is, freedom of describing one's belief for debate or discussion, as we shall explain below in item 14.

10. What is the Way to Change and Perfection in Islamic Society?

It might be said: Agreed that the Islamic system encompasses all that is necessary for a happy life, and that the Islamic society is enviably happy and pleasant. But this system, because of its all pervasiveness and lack of freedom of belief, leads to stagnation of society, retards its evolutionary progress, and blocks the way to change and perfection—and, as they say, it is a serious defect for a society which claims to be perfect. Evolutionary process demands presence of opposite forces in a thing: those forces, through mutual action and reaction [through conflict between an original direction and its direct opposite], would bring about a new position free from the defects of the original forces. If we admit that Islam removes the opposite tenets and especially the beliefs opposed to its fundamentals, then such a society would be brought to a standstill in its evolutionary progress.

Comment: It is one of the objections of the dialectical materialism; but it is based on an astonishing confusion. Human knowledge and belief is of two kinds: One, that which accepts change and evolution: these are technical subjects that serve to raise the standard of material life and to subdue the natural forces, example—the mathematics, the physics, etc. Whenever these subjects and technologies would progress from lower to higher level, from defectiveness to perfection, the society would accordingly change and progress.

The other type of knowledge is that which does not accept change—although it accepts perfection in another sense. This is the metaphysical divine knowledge and cognition, that unveils the genesis and resurrection,

happiness and unhappiness, etc. It explains these affairs definitely and finally; there is no change or evolution in it—although it accepts development and perfection in the sense of depth and detail. This knowledge and this cognition do not effect societies and ways of life except in a general manner. If this knowledge and these beliefs remain standstill in one condition, it would not cause the society to stop in its developmental progress. We know that we have a lot of general ideas which are unchangeable and static, but they have not hindered the society's progress. For example, we say and believe that man should work to protect his life; that the work should aim at a benefit returning to the man; that man should live within a society; that the universe exists in reality, it is not a delusion; that man is a part of the universe, a part of the planet called the Earth; and that he has got some limbs and organs, some powers and faculties. There are a lot of other such confirmed and unchangeable informations and beliefs, and their immutability does not affect the progress of the society, nor does it make the society stagnant. In this category comes the belief that the universe needs, and is created by, One God, Who has ordained for the people a comprehensive law that combines all the ways of happiness, and which was sent to us through the prophets, and He will gather all people on a day when He will award them the recompense of their deeds. It is the only foundation on which Islam has built its social order, and which it jealously guards. As is known, it is such a proposition that, if made subject to dialectical conflict between thesis and anti-thesis producing a synthesis, it would cause decline and retrogress of the society—as we have explained several times. This is also the case with all real facts and truths related to metaphysics; their rejection cannot do any good to the society, it can bring only its decline and fall.

In short, human society in its evolutionary progress needs day to day change and perfection only in the ways of exploiting natural resources. It takes place through continuing technical research and application of knowledge to practical needs; and Islam does not hinder this process in the least.

As for the changes in the principles of sociology, in the theoretical aspects of social order—like autocratic monarchy, democracy, communism and theories like that—they become necessary only when the prevalent system fails to bring the society nearer to social perfection. It is not an evolution from defectiveness to perfection. If there is any relation between one theory and the other, it is that of wrong and right, not

that of defective and perfect, nor of undeveloped and developed. Now suppose that a social order is firmly established exactly as man's nature desires, that is, on social justice; people under its beneficial training are equipped with useful knowledge and good deeds; then enhancing the level of the knowledge and activities, they are proceeding joyfully and energetically towards their happiness; in this way they are continuously perfecting themselves and increasing the sphere of their happiness and felicity. What is the need, in this case, to change such a social order? What do they want more than that? No thinking person will say that man must change everything around himself even if there is no need for any change.

Objection: You cannot avoid change even in those things which you claim to be above the change, like beliefs, noble ethics, etc. All these things do change with the passage of time when social conventions change and new environment replaces the old. No one can deny that the thinking of modern man are so different from those of the ancient ones. Likewise, his ideas are affected by variation in his habitat, that is, whether he lives in equatorial, polar or moderate zone. Also, his way of life affects his thinking, depending on whether he is a boss or a servant, a Bedouin or a townsman, prosperous or unprosperous, rich or poor and so on. No doubt, ideas and opinions differ with difference in influencing factors, and change when the times change.

Reply: This objection is based on the theory of relativity of human knowledge and ideas. According to this theory, truth and falsehood, good and evil, are relative affairs. General theoretical knowledge concerned with genesis and resurrection, as well as general practical opinions (example—the proposition that society is good for man, or that justice is a virtue—a general proposition, not as applied to practical conditions) have only relative values which always change with the change of time, environment and conditions. But we have described in another place the falsity of this theory in its generality.[1]

The sum total of our discourse there, was that this theory does not cover general theoretical propositions and a part of general practical ideas.

It is enough to show invalidity of generality of this theory that: If we agree that this theory is in fact general, unrestricted and unchangeable, then it entails acceptance of [at least] one unrestricted general proposition that is not relative—and that is this theory, this proposition, itself.

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 2. (Trans.)

Alternatively, if we say that it is not an unrestricted generality, but only a partially correct proposition, then it proves—as a concomitant—existence of unrestricted general propositions. Thus, the theory is not general, in any case. In other words, if it is correct that 'Every opinion and belief must change at some time', then this theory itself must change one day, that is, there should be some beliefs and opinions that will never change. (Think it over.)

11. Is Islamic Shariah Competent to bring Happiness in the Modern Life?

Someone might ask: Let us say that Islam had provided a comprehensive guidance for all situations of life as it was in those days when the Qur'an was revealed; and was thus able to lead that society to its true happiness and to all its ambitions. But times have changed; and so have the ways of human life. The culture and mechanical life of modern civilization is totally different from the simple life of fourteen centuries ago that was confined to primitive natural resources. Now man, as a result of his long and arduous struggles, has reached a level of development and civilization which, if compared to his condition of a few centuries earlier, would look like a comparison between two different species. How can the laws made to regulate the life of that time solve the problems of modern times' complicated and ingenious life? How can either of the societies take the burden of the other on itself?

Reply: Obviously, there is difference between the two eras—in the forms of life. But it does not mean difference in general principles and substance of life. What has changed is not the principle, but its application. Man even today needs food to eat, clothes to wear, house to live in, means of transportation to carry him and his goods from one place to another, and a society to belong to, as well as associations and connections of various types—sexual, commercial, technical, professional, etc. This need is general and universal; it will not change as long as man is man with this nature and physique, as long as his is a human life. There is no difference in this matter between a primitive man and a modern one. The difference is only in the means and equipment which he uses to satisfy his material needs. The primitive man used to eat fruits, vegetables and game meat, which he obtained in simple ways. Today he has got thousands of preparations for food and drink, of various qualities beneficial to his nature, different colors pleasing to his eyes, various flavours delicious to

his taste, attractive shapes and forms pleasant to his touch, with a lot of other variations in its specifications. But all this variation does not change the basic reality that both categories are food, which man eats to satiate his hunger and satisfy his desire.

These general conditions and ideas of man have not changed with the change of times; it is only their applications that have taken other shapes. In the same way, the general laws of Islam—that have been laid down according to the demand of nature for attainment of happiness—are not nullified just because a new means has replaced the old one, if the conformity with basic nature is not affected, if the new means has not deviated from nature. But if there is any conflict with the nature, then Islamic system never agrees with it, neither in old days nor in modern times.

As for rules concerned with day to day affairs and happenings, which by their nature are subject to rapid change, like monetary and administrative matters related to defence, means of communications, transport, municipal affairs and things like that—they are left to the discretion of the ruler. A ruler has the same position within his domain as a head of the family has within his family. The ruler may take decisions about these matters as the family head may do for his family. The ruler may decide about the internal and external affairs of his country—regarding war or peace, financial or other matters—keeping in view the interest of the society, after holding consultations with the Muslims. As God says: *and take counsel with them in the affairs; but when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah* [3:159]. All this concerns the public affairs.

However, these rules and decisions are of specific nature, not general. They may change according to the situation and condition; policies may change because of new factors coming up and old ones going away. But divine rules are not so, they do not come and go; they are based on the Book and the *sunnah*, and they are not subject to abrogation. (Its detail will be given somewhere else.)

12. Who is entitled to rule over the Islamic Society? What Characteristics he should have?

The authority to rule over the Islamic society belonged to the Messenger of God; and the Qur'an clearly says that the people were obliged to obey him and follow his commands. God says:

And obey Allah and obey the Messenger [64:12];

… that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah

has taught you [4:105];

The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves [33:6];

Say: "If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you" [3:31].

There are many such verses that describe one or the other aspects of his all-encompassing general authority over the Islamic society.

The best way to understand this reality is to study deeply the life of the Prophet and then to ponder collectively on the verses revealed about ethics and laws covering the divine worship, mutual dealings, politics, and other common and social affairs. The picture that will appear on his mind from the sum total of this divine revelation will speak more eloquently than that which may be seen from one or two sentences.

There is another point that a research scholar must keep in mind. Generally the verses dealing with the subjects of the rites of worship, fighting in the way of God, enforcement of the penal code and other such subjects are addressed to the believers collectively, not especially to the Prophet. For example:

… and establish prayers … [4:77];

… and strive hard in His way … [5:35];

… and give upright testimony for Allah … [65:2];

… fasting has been prescribed for you … [2:183];

And spend in the way of Allah … [2:195];

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong [3:104];

And strive hard in (the way of) Allah a striving as is due to Him … [22:78];

(As for) the fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them, (giving) a hundred stripes … [24:2];

And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands … [5:38];

And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation …[2:179];

And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided … [3:103];

… that establish the religion and be not divided therein … [42:13];

And Muḥammad is no more than a messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least; and Allah will reward the grateful [3:144].

There are many verses of this nature, and all taken together make it clear that the religion is a collective matter which God has made people responsible for; He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants; and He intends only that collectively they should establish the religion. The society of which they are members should be managed by themselves—none of them should be less responsible than the others. Enforcement of law is not an especial prerogative of some to the exclusion of the others be he the Prophet or the others. God says: *That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other* [3:195]. The verse is unrestricted; and it shows that God has kept in consideration the natural effect the members of the Islamic society have on their social order—He cares for it in legislation as He has done in creation. He will not let it [go to] waste. He says: *Surely the land is Allah's; He causes such of His servants to inherit it as He pleases, and the end is for those who fear (Allah)* [7:128].

Of course, to the Messenger of God belongs the mission, the guidance and the training. God says: *… who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom …* [62:2]. He was appointed by God to look after the *ummah*, and manage its affairs in this world as in the hereafter, and he continued to lead them as long as he was alive.

But one should not forget that this system was totally different from a monarchic rule—the rule which treats God's wealth as personal booty of the monarch, and the servants of God as his slaves; giving him full authority to do with them whatever he wants and rule over them in any way he pleases. Nor was it like the social orders based on the principle of material enjoyment, like democracy, etc. because there are so many distinguishing factors that separate Islam from these systems, and which have left no room for any mix-up.

One of the greatest differences is found in the fact that these societies, being based on material enjoyment, are motivated by the spirit of exploitation and utilization. It is another name of man's arrogance, that wants everything—even other human beings—subjugated to his will and actions. It permits him to take any route to reach that end; to use any means to get what he desires, to acquire what he wants. In olden days it was known as despotic monarchy; now it appears before our eyes wearing the mask of development and civilization. We are daily witnessing the oppressions, injustices and arrogance meted out by strong nations to

the weaker ones; is there any need to remind ourselves of their tyrannies and high-handedness recorded in the histories?

A Pharaoh, a Caesar or a Kisra behaved despotically towards weaker sections of his reign, and played with their lives, properties and dignity in any way he liked. His excuse—if any excuse was ever offered—was that it was a necessary ingredient of rulership which contributed to the efficiency of government and strengthened the Kingdom. He believed that it was a tribute due to his outstanding qualities, to his sovereign status—and his sword spoke for him. Exactly the same thing is happening even now. Look at political relationships of today's strong nations with the weak ones; you will find the history repeating itself. Of course, the scepter previously held by an individual is now carried collectively by the society, but the spirit is the same and the ambition unchanged.

On the other hand, Islamic system is free of such ambitions and desires; and its proof may be found in the life of the Prophet as evidenced by his conquests and treaties.

Another difference: No human society, that ever appeared on the stage of history, was free from various types of disparity among its members, a factor that always led to discord and chaos. If there are various strata, different classes, in society, it is ultimately bound to destroy the social order: when a few persons hoard treasures of wealth while the common people do not get necessities of life; when elites or nobles get all the privileges which the public is deprived of; when so-called "public servants" become overlords of the country, then the nation is bound to fall into perdition.

Islamic society presents a pleasant contrast:

First: It is a social order whose parts are all alike; no one has precedence over the others; there is no privileged class, no dignified lords, no distinguished group. If there is any distinction it is the one loudly demanded by human nature; it is the superiority accorded to piety—and it is a factor which is in God's hand to decide, men have nothing to do with it. God says: *O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who is most pious* [49:13]; *therefore hasten to (do) good works* [2:148].

Second: The ruler and the ruled, the leader and the follower, the superior and the subordinate, the free man and the slave, the man and the woman, the rich and the poor, the big and the small, all of them have equal status in Islam. The legal code is equally applied to all; there is no

class at all in social affairs and civil aspects—as may be seen in the life of the Prophet.

A third distinction: The executive power in Islam is not confined within a separate class; implementation of Islamic laws is the responsibility of all members of the society. Each and every individual is obligated to call to the good, to enjoin what is good and forbid the evil. There are many other distinguishing features which a research scholar may easily find out.

This was the condition during the lifetime of the Prophet. As for the subsequent period, the majority of the Muslims believe that it is the Muslims who have the right to choose a caliph to rule over the society; but the Shīʿī Muslims believe that the caliph must be appointed by God and His Messenger, and that they are the twelve Imāms (as explained in detail in theological books).

In any case, there is no doubt that in these days, when the Prophet has died and the twelfth Imām is in occultation, the authority of the Islamic government lies in the hands of the Muslims themselves. It may be inferred from the Divine Book that they are required to appoint a ruler for the Islamic society according to the tradition established by the Messenger of God—and that is the tradition of *imāmah*, not of monarchy or imperialism. That ruler has the responsibility of enforcing the Islamic laws without any change. As for other matters—apart from the laid down laws—he has to manage the affairs with consultations according to the time and situation.

The proof of the above may be inferred from the verses describing the overall authority of the Prophet when read in conjunction with the verse, *Certainly there is for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example …* [33:21].

13. The Boundary of Islamic State is Ideology and Belief, not Physical Landmarks, nor Man-made Borders

Islam has totally refused the theory of national separateness to have any effect or influence on the society. What is the basic factor of nationalism? It has emanated from nomadism and tribal and clannish way of life; another influencing factor was the physical differences in regions or habitat where various groups lived. These two—nomadic wanderings and natural differences in various geographical regions, like hot or cold climate, barrenness or fertility of land, and other features like that—led to the division of mankind into various clans and tribes, as well as to the differences in

their languages and colors, as has been explained in its place.

Later these two factors led every group to take possession of the piece of land or region where they lived—it depended on their endeavour and strength. They reserved it for themselves, called it their "home country"; gradually they came to love it and repulse the intruders from it with all their powers.

Although this phenomenon came into being for satisfying a natural need, yet it contained a characteristic which was diametrically opposed to the demand of basic human nature, that is, the demand that mankind should live as one single society. It is self-evident that nature wants various scattered powers to join hands and unite, in order that they may get strengthened by that consolidation and union; it will help it to attain its desired good purpose in the best and most perfect way. We may observe this phenomenon in the upward progress of primary matter—it appears first as an element, then passing through different stages it becomes a vegetable, then an animal, then a human being.

When mankind is divided according to the countries people live in, then inhabitants of a country join hands together and unite as citizens of that country; as a result they are separated from other nationalities. They together constitute a "nation", a unit that is totally separate—in body and spirit—from other nations, other units. In this manner, humanity is deprived of its unity and wholeness; and is afflicted by discord, difference and disunity—the very trap which it wanted to avoid. Now this "new" unit starts treating other "new" units (that is other nations) in the same way as it treats other natural things; that is, it wants to exploit and subjugate other nations. The experience—from the early dawn of humanity to this day—testifies to this truth; and the same theme may be inferred from many verses quoted in earlier discourses.

That is why Islam has discarded these differences, divisions, and separations altogether; and has based the society on the foundation of faith and belief, instead of race, origin, domicile or other such considerations. Even in such matters as matrimony and consanguinity, the criterion for the conjugal rights and inheritance is not the home or country, but identity of monotheistic belief.

The best proof for this reality may be seen in various facets of this religion's laws, as it has not neglected any aspect of human life without giving a clear direction for it. If the Islamic society is dominating over the world, then the Muslims are obligated to establish the religion and not be

disunited. If it is oppressed and overpowered, then again they must try to revive and revitalize the Islam, and to raise its prestige as much as they can. Even if there is only one Muslim in a place, it is his duty to hold fast to the religion, to act according to its laws and to implement it as much as he can—even if it is only by having belief in the heart and praying just by gestures.

It is clear from the above that the Islamic society has been framed in such a way that it can be lived in all conditions, and in every situation—no matter whether Muslims are rulers or ruled, victorious or vanquished, advanced or backward, conspicuous or hidden, powerful or powerless. Particularly, the Qur'anic verses dealing with the subject of *al-taqiyyah* (dissimulation of one's religion under duress or in face of threatening harm or damage) make this reality abundantly clear. God says: *He who disbelieves in God after his having believed, not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith …* [16:106]; *… except when you guard yourselves against them for fear of them …* [3:28]; *Therefore fear God as much as you can* [64:16]; *O you who believe! fear God with the fear which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims* [3:102].

14. Islam cares for Social Order in all its Aspects

The verse under discussion, *O you who believe! be patient, and help each other in patience and remain lined up, and fear Allah, that you may be successful*, proves this fact (as explained earlier) apart from many other verses.

Islam makes it a point to establish collectivity in every law and rule which can be observed jointly or performed collectively in relevant manner, ordering and exhorting the Muslims in a way that would lead to the desired goal. A research scholar should look at it from two angles:

First: One should keep in view the difference in degrees of emphasis on collectivity. The Law-Giver has ordained joint efforts directly in *jihād* to the extent that is necessary for the defence. This is the highest category. Then fasting and *ḥajj* have been made obligatory for everyone who is able to do so (and has no genuine excuse for exemption); and as a concomitant people are bound to gather together for these two rites of worship; then they have been sealed by the two *ʿīds* and their prayers. Then come the daily five-time prayers which are obligatory for every adult and sane Muslim, but congregation is not compulsory in them. Even then, one congregational prayer has been made obligatory once a week on Fridays within a radius of one *farsakh* (a distant of 6000 yards). So it is another category.

Second: As we have seen, Islam has prescribed congregation for some things directly. Further we find that in some other things it has put emphasis on gathering and collectivity without making it directly obligatory, example, obligatory prayers performed in congregation; it is *sunnah* and highly recommended, as it is a tradition established by the Prophet, and people are exhorted to establish the Prophet's traditions.[1] The Messenger of God once said about a group of the Muslims who avoided coming to the congregational prayer: "We are on the verge of ordering—about a group that has left praying in the mosque that firewood be brought and put on their doors; then fire be kindled over them and their houses be burnt down on them." That is the way to be followed in all the traditions established by the Messenger of God; the Muslims are obligated to preserve his traditions by all possible means and at all costs.

These are the subjects related to *ijtihād* based on the Book [of God] and the *sunnah*; and their explanations and details may be seen in the Islamic Jurisprudence.

Now that we know that Islam emphasizes collectivity in all laws (rites of worship, mutual dealings, and political affairs) which it has laid down for the people, as well as in noble manners and basic beliefs, the time has come to turn our eyes to another direction, that is, the collectivity of Islam in its basic knowledge and fundamental gnosis.

We find that Islam invites the people to the natural religion on the ground that it is the manifest truth in which there is no doubt. There are numerous Qur'anic verses of this theme, which need not be quoted here. This in itself is the first step in joining and uniting different minds; because people—in spite of their differences, and their attachments to various customs and characteristics—are united in the belief that: "Truth must be followed."

Then we see that Islam accepts the excuse of a person for whom the proof has not been furnished, and the path not made clear, even though he might have heard some arguments. God says: … *that he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof* … [8:42]; *Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way (to escape); so these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving*

1 *Wasāʾilu al-Shīʿah*, *Kitābu al-Ṣalāh*, chapter of undesirability of avoiding congregational prayer. (Auth.)

[4:99]. Look at the unrestricted nature of the verse and the position of the clause, "who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way." These words give complete freedom to every thinker (who is able to think, examine and research) to meditate on matters connected with religious cognition and to ponder on them deeply. Moreover, the Qur'anic verses are full of exhortation to meditate, contemplate and ruminate.

It is not a secret that various internal and external factors affect people's thinking in different ways—in its imagination and confirmation as well as in its achievements and decisions. Consequently, it leads to difference in those fundamental principles upon which the Islamic society is based (as we have earlier explained).

However, the difference in understanding of two persons (as explained in psychology, ethics and sociology) emanates from one of the following factors:

It may issue from the difference in psychological traits and intrinsic characteristics—be they good or bad. Such factors have great effect on human knowledge and cognition, because they affect intellectual capacity and ability. The perception and intellectual performance of an upright and just man cannot be compared to that of a headstrong tyrant; a moderate and dignified person will receive knowledge in a way that cannot be imitated by a rash, prejudiced and narrow-minded man; nor by a barbarian who follows every Tom, Dick and Harry; nor by a misguided person who does not know where he is rushing to or what is going to happen to him. This difference can easily be overcome through religious training. This training agrees with religious principles and cognitions, and creates such characteristics that conform with those principles, noble virtues. God says: *… a Book revealed after Moses verifying that which is before it, guiding to the truth and to a right path* [46:30]; *With it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to the straight path* [5:16]; *And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good* [29:69]. The relevance of these verses with the subject matter is obvious.

Or it may be a result of the difference in actions. Anti-truth activities like sins and various kinds of lust, temptations and wicked thoughts, teach a man—especially if he is simple-minded—wrong ideas; and prepare his mind for infiltration of doubts and penetration of erroneous thoughts. In this way is created difference in thinking and resistance against the truth.

Islam has laid down some rules to overcome this difficulty:

Firstly, it has obligated the society to call the people to the religion—continuously;

Secondly, it has ordered the society to enjoin the good and forbid the evil;

Thirdly and lastly, it has made it compulsory to dissociate from deviating persons and doubting groups.

God says: *And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong …* [3:104]. Inviting to good would confirm the true belief and let its roots grow deep in the hearts—through constant teachings and reminders. Then enjoining what is right and forbidding the evil would erase adverse traits that could prevent the true belief from taking root. Also God says: *And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse; and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people. And nothing of the reckoning of their (deeds) shall be upon those who guard (against evil), but (theirs) is only to remind, haply they may guard. And leave those who have taken their religion for a play and an idle sport, and whom this world's life has deceived, and remind (them) thereby lest a soul should be fettered with what it has earned* [6:68–70]. Here God admonishes the Muslims not to join in a discourse that aims at creating doubt, directing objections or casting aspersions upon religious facts, and divine realities—even if by allusion or implication. He reminds us that it can happen only if man does not take his religion seriously, treats it only as a vain sport or on idle game; it happens when man is beguiled by this transient life; and it may be remedied only through good training and constant reminder of God's majesty.

Or this difference may be a result of some extraneous factors; for example, if the man lives in a remote corner where the message of true faith has not reached; or has reached only superfluously or in a distorted form. Or if the man does not have enough understanding to properly grasp the realities of religion, as in the case of idiots or simpletons.

Islam has prescribed for it two remedies: the propagation of religion should cover each and every corner of the world, and the people should be invited to Islam patiently with politeness and good manners. These two factors are the specialities of Islam's missionary activities. God says: *Say: "This is my way: I invite (you) to Allah; with clear sight (are) I and he who*

follows me" [12:108]. It is known that a proficient and discerning speaker gauges how much his words would influence a man, what would be their effect on different people of different types; therefore, he speaks only what would be listened to. The Messenger of God has said—and it has been narrated by both sects: "We, the group of prophets, talk with people according to the measure of their understanding." God says: … *why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire (proper) understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious?* [9:122].

These in short, are various ways for avoiding difference in belief, and of removing the difference if it appears.

Islam has also laid down a further sociological rule to prevent the difference creeping into the society (which could lead to disorder and weakness of the social order). God says: *And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His way; this He has enjoined you with that you may guard (against evil)* [6:153]. This verse makes it clear that if they remained united in following the straight path, and cautious against following the other ways, they would be saved from disunity; and their unity and identity would be preserved. Again He says: *O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims. And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided …* [3:102–103]. It has already been explained that "the cord of God" refers to the Qur'an which explains the realities of religion, or to the Qur'an and the Messenger together, as may be inferred from the verses preceding these: *O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book, they will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed. But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His Messenger. And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path* [3:100–101].

These verses emphasize the importance of unity in religious beliefs, identity of ideas and ideals and cooperation in seeking and imparting knowledge. Whenever the people are confronted with a new ideology or assailed with a doubt, they should resort to the Qur'an that is recited to them, and meditate on it, so that the roots of difference are pulled out. God says: *Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* [4:82]; *And these examples, We set them forth for the people and none understand them*

but the learned [29:43]; *so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know* [16:43]. The verses show that differences may be removed by meditating on the Qur'an or by referring the matter to those who do meditate.

Also, they prove that referring to the Messenger—and he has the overall responsibility of religion—would remove the discord and disunity from the society and explain the truth which they were obligated to follow. God says: … *and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect* [16:44]. Nearly the same is the import of the verse: … *and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out (the truth) in it, would have known it* [4:83]; *O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything; refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the last day; this is better and very good in the end* [4:59].

This then is the picture of collective thinking in Islam.

The above discourse also shows that this religion allows the people complete freedom of thought in the same way as it safeguards the especial divine cognition. The way shown by it is as follows:

It is obligatory for the Muslims to meditate on the realities of religion and to try their utmost to think and research for its cognition—collectively and in cooperation with each other. They should not be worried if in this process they are assailed with a doubt or conflicting pointers. What is required in this case is to review his doubt or thought with the help of the Qur'an—through collective meditation. If that does not remove the trouble, then he should refer it to the Messenger or his successor so that his doubt is removed, and (if it was not valid then) its invalidity is explained to him. God says: *Those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; these are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding* [39:18].

Freedom of belief and thought (as we have described above) is something different from the freedom to propagate that idea or belief before referring it to the Qur'an and the Messenger or his successors. Such propaganda would lead to disunity and discord which in its turn would damage the foundation of the healthy society.

What has been mentioned above is the best possible system for running the society's affairs, inasmuch as it opens the door to intellectual development, and at the same time preserves man's personal freedom.

On the other hand, imposition of belief on the people, putting seals on their hearts, crushing the thinking power of men by suppression and oppression, and keeping them in line through whip or sword, anathema or excommunication, boycott or banishment—far be it from Islam to allow or agree to such tactics. In fact, such tactics were and are the trademark of the Christianity. The history of the Church is replete with its misdeeds, misconducts and high-handedness—particularly between the fifth and the sixteenth centuries of the Christian era. You would look in vain for any parallel in history to the tyrannies, oppressions and cruelties perpetrated by the Christian Church.

Regrettably, we Muslims are now deprived of this bounty and its concomitants (that is, collective thinking and freedom of belief), just as we have been deprived of many other great bounties which God had bestowed on us. It is because we have fallen short of our duties towards God; and God does not change the condition of a people unless they change their own condition. Now, the churchly behavior has taken root in our society, with the result that there is disharmony among the hearts and discord in the society; and various sects and groups have raised their heads. May God forgive us, and help us to do what He is pleased with, and guide us to His straight path.

15. The True Religion will Ultimately Prevail over the World

The good end belongs to piety, to fear of God. Human species, by its nature that is ingrained in it, is seeking its true happiness looking for its real felicity. In other words, it is striving to sit firmly on the throne of its spiritual-cum-physical life—a social life that would give the soul its full share in this world as well as in the hereafter. We have already told you that it is what is known as Islam, the religion of monotheism.

There have appeared deviations in humanity's march towards its destination, in its ascension to the pinnacle of perfection. But it happens not because the nature has lost its hold, but simply because of some error of judgment, some mistake in applying a principle to a particular situation. The goal decided by creative nature has to be reached sooner or later, it cannot be avoided. God says: *Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration in the creation of Allah; that is the right religion, but most people do not know.* (That is, they do not have its detailed knowledge, although their nature is aware of it in a general way.)

… So as to be ungrateful for what We have given them; but enjoy yourselves (for a while), for you shall soon come to know … Mischief has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return [30:30-41]. Again He says: *… then soon Allah will bring a people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, humble before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer* [5:54]; *And certainly We did write in the Zabūr after the reminder that the earth shall inherit it My righteous servants* [21:105]; *and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil)* [20:132]. These and similar other verses tell us clearly that Islam is bound to prevail, appearing one day in its most perfect and complete form; and then it will rule over the world.

Question: Islam appeared on the world's stage at a certain time; it was a link in the chain of history, and it left its effects on the succeeding links. The modern civilization is, wittingly or unwittingly, much indebted to Islam. In spite of that, it is just a wishful thinking that Islam would prevail over the world, that this religion—with all its elements, in its complete form—would ever rule over the earth and attain its goals. It is a proposition which human nature does not accept and would never agree with. Moreover, it, has never been tested in this role, so that we may say that it could really happen and that Islam could ever dominate over the humanity.

Reply: This objection is untenable. We have explained earlier that Islam—in the meaning we have been using it for—is the final destination of mankind, the perfection of humanity to which it is driven by nature; it makes no difference whether man recognizes that goal in its full details or not. Definite experiences, obtained from other species, prove that every species is proceeding towards the goal which is relevant to its being; it is driven to its final destination by the system of creation and man is not an exception to this universal rule.

Moreover, no system, no "ism", that had ever prevailed, or now prevails, in any human society, was ever proved by any previous experiment before it was enforced. Look at the shariahs brought by Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus—they just appeared on the scene and were implemented. The same was the case with the laws brought by Brahma, Buddha, Māni and others. In the same way, the secular systems, like democracy and communism, etc., were established in various societies in different manners—all without any previous experimentation.

What is required for a social system to be established and to take its roots, is a group of persons with courage of their convictions, endowed with firm determination and high ideals, who would not rest until they have reached their goal; who would not tire, would not be weakened; who would not be assailed by doubts and misgivings about their ultimate success; they would never entertain the idea that perchance they could fail, that perhaps their endeavours would not succeed. They would go on trying determinedly until they have succeeded. This principle applies everywhere, and it makes no difference whether the goal itself is divine or Satanic.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣādiq said about the words of God, *O you who believe! be patient and help each other in patience and remain lined up:* "Have patience in misfortunes, and help each other to be patient in trial [and temptation], and be lined up with him whom you follow." (*Maʿāni al-akhbār*)

(2) The same Imām said: "Be patient about your religion, and have patience against your enemy and be linked up to your Imām" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: Nearly the same theme has been narrated from the Prophet through the Sunnī chains.

(3) The same Imām said: "Be patient about the obligatory commandments, and help each other to be patient in misfortunes, and be linked up to the Imāms." (*al-Kāfī*)

(4) ʿAlī said: "Be lined up for the prayers." He said: "That is, remain waiting for them, because (the system of) garrisoning did not exist at that time." (*Majmaʿ al-bayān*)

Author's comments: The difference in the traditions springs from the generality of the orders, as we had mentioned earlier.

(5) Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Ḥayyān have narrated from Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'Should not I guide you to that by which God erases the mistakes and covers the sins?' We said: 'Yes, indeed, O Messenger of God!' He said: 'To perform *al-wuḍūʾ* (ablution) properly in spite of inconveniences, and to walk many times to the mosques, and to wait for the (next) prayer after the prayer; so that is the lining up.' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: [al-Suyuṭī] has narrated it from the Prophet, also

through other chains. There are innumerable traditions about excellence of being lined up or linked up.

End of Chapter 3

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Chapter 4

Sūrah Al-Nisāʾ

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Verse 1

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate[1]

The chapter aims—as may be seen from its opening verse—describing matrimonial laws, like the number of wives allowed, the women with whom marriage is forbidden and things like that; together with the laws of inheritance. It also touches on some other matters, example—some rules of prayer, *jihād,* evidence, commerce, etc., and some comments on the People of the Book.

The subject matters indicate that it is a Medinite chapter revealed after hijrah. Apparently it was revealed piecemeal, not all at one time, although we find in most of the verses some sort of connection with one another.

This verse [4:1] (as well as a few following ones which touch the subject of orphans and women) are a sort of prologue to prepare the minds for the rules of inheritance and marriage. The permissible number of wives that comes in the third verse—although an important subject—has been mentioned here just as a side-line, taking advantage of the talk preceding it, as we shall describe in its Commentary.

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1 *Bismillāh al-Raḥmāni al-Raḥīm* is a part—in fact, the first verse—of every chapter except the ninth. It is the well-known and unanimous verdict of the Ahl al-bayt who according to the Prophet were inseparable Companions of the Qur'an. According to al-Zamakhsharī, the reciters and jurists of Mecca and Kūfah, as well as al-Shāfiʿī and his followers are of the same view, as was Ibn ʿAbbās, who said that whoever leaves *Bismillāh* … , leaves 114 verses of the Book of God. (Vide al-*Kashshāf*, Beirut, vol. 1, pp. 24–26)
But the author has followed the system of numbering used by the majority of the Muslims (including the Ḥanafites, the Mālikites and the reciters of Baṣrah and Syria) whereby they do not count it as a verse. Probably, he has done so to avoid confusion in references. (Trans.)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾

(4:1) ***O people! fear your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and fear Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (be mindful of) relationship; surely Allah is vigilant over you.***

The verse calls them [the people] to the fear of their Lord, to the piety, concerning their selves, as they all are human beings, identical in their humanity; there is no difference among them in this reality; man and woman, big and small, old and young, weak and strong, all are the same in their humanity. Therefore, man should not oppress a woman, nor should a big and strong person trample on his smaller or weaker fellow, neither in their society to which God has guided them for completion of their happiness, nor in the laws or rules adopted by them which God has inspired them to. They have been given the laws in order that they may live an easy life, their existence may be protected and they may continue in this world, as individuals and as members of society.

This explains why the verse is addressed to "the people", and not only to the believers. It also shows why they have been admonished to fear their "Lord", instead of saying "fear God" or using some other divine name, because the condition attributed to them, "Who created you from a single being … many men and women", encompasses the whole mankind and is not confined to the believers; and these are the attributes more relevant to Lordship (that is, concerned with the affairs of managing and perfecting) and not with the attributes of worship or divinity.

Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind): *al-Nafs* (translated here as "being") according to the dictionary and language denotes the thing itself. They say: "He came to me (*nafsuhu*) himself"; or "He came to me (*ʿaynuhu*) the self same"; although the basis for the use of these two words, *al-Nafs* and *al-ʿayn* in this meaning (self; same; quiddity of a thing) is etymologically different. *al-Nafs* of a man is that because of which man is man; and it is the combination of soul and body in this life and only the soul in the life of *al-Barzakh*, as we have

explained in the Commentary of the verse: *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive* [2:154].

The context obviously shows that the words, "a single being", refer to Adam and "its mate" [refers] to Adam's wife. These two were the progenitors of this species to which we all belong; and all the human beings return to the same root, to those two parents, as God says in other verses too: *He has created you from a single being, then made its mate of the same (kind)* [39:6]; *O children of Adam! let not the Satan cause you to fall into affliction as he expelled your parents from the Garden* [7:27]; and the Satan is quoted as saying: *If Thou shouldst respite me to the Day of Resurrection, I will most certainly cause his progeny to perish except a few* [17:62].

An exegete has opined: The words, "a single being" and "its mate", in this verse refer to human couple of male and female in general, on which human progeny depends. The verse in effect means: 'God has created everyone of you from a human father and mother, there is no difference among you in this respect.' Thus it goes parallel to the words of God: *O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who guards himself most (against evil)* [49:13]. Apparently, it shows that there is no distinction among individuals inasmuch as each has been born of a couple of the same species—from a male and a female.

But this interpretation is patently false. The said exegete has missed the clear difference between this verse of the Chapter of the "The Women" and that of the Chapter 49 (The Chambers). The latter intends to show that all human beings are one inasmuch as all are human beings, and there is no difference among them in this respect because everyone is born of a human father and a human mother; therefore no one should think himself as superior to the others, as there is no distinction or superiority except through piety. On the other hand, the verse under discussion intends to show their unity in their reality, that all human beings, in spite of their great number and their division between males and females, are the branches of the same root; and although they are now numerous, all of them have sprung from the same source, as the apparent meaning of the phrase, "and spread from these two, many men and women", shows. This idea is lost if we take the words, "a single being", and "its mate", to mean human males and females in general who are the means of producing

children. Moreover, this interpretation is not in keeping with the Chapter's main aim, as explained above.

… and created its mate of the same (kind): al-Rāghib has said:

> "Each member of a pair of opposite sexes in living creatures is called *al-zawj* (pair, couple, mate); so is a pair in animate and inanimate things, example—a pair of socks or shoes; also it is used for anything taken together with another, whether they are similar or opposite to each other … [Use of] *al-zawjah* (wife) [to denote female or the above mentioned pairs] is bad language."

The clause, "and created its mate of the same", apparently is meant to show that its mate was of the same species—similar in humanity to the [original] "single soul"; and that all these human beings are the offspring of the original couple—the two similar human beings. The preposition *min* (from, of) therefore signifies origin. The verse has the same import as the others given below:

And Allah has made wives for you from among yourselves, and has given you sons and grandchildren from your wives … [16:72];

And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion [30:21];

The Originator of the heavens and the earth; He made mates for you from among yourselves, and mates of the cattle too, multiplying you thereby [42:11];

Of similar connotation is the verse:

And of every thing We have created pairs that you may be mindful [51:49].

In spite of this clear meaning, some exegetes have written that the verse tends to show that the mate was derived from that single being and created from one of its parts. This explanation aims at making the verse conform with some traditions which say that God had created Adam's wife from one of his ribs. But the fact remains that the verse does not support this view.

… and spread from these two, many men and women: *al-Baththh* (to spread, to propagate through dissemination or scattering, etc.); God says: *So that they shall be as scattered dust* [56:6]. On this connotation is based the idiom, to spread the sorrow; and that is why sometimes they use the word *al-baththh* to denote grief and sorrow itself, because it is something which man by nature spreads [to his friends and relatives]; God says: *He*

said: "I only complain of (baththi) *my grief and sorrow to Allah"* [12:86].

The verse apparently shows that the present human race originates from Adam and his wife without anyone else having any share in it; God says: *and spread from these two, many men and women*; He has not said: 'and spread from these two and some others'. Proceeding from this interpretation we arrive at the following two conclusions:

First: The words, "many men and women", refer to all human beings from their progeny, be they their immediate children or children's children. Thus the words mean: and spread you, O people! from these two.

Second: Marriage of the first generation after Adam and his wife (that is, of their immediate children), was done between brothers and sisters (that is, Adam's sons married his daughters), because they were the only human males and females at that time. There was no harm in this; because it is a legislative matter and it depends on the discretion of God; He may allow it one day and disallow it another day. God says:

Judgment is only Allah's [12:40]; *And Allah pronounces an order—there is no repeller of His decree* [13:41]; *… and He does not make any one His associate in His judgment* [18:26]; *And He is Allah, there is no god but He! All praise is due to Him and this (life) and the hereafter, and His is the judgment, and to Him you shall be brought back* [28:70].

… and fear Allah by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (be mindful of) relationship: *al-Tasaāʾul* (to ask one another); here it refers to people's asking one another in the name of God. One says to his companions: I ask you by God to do so and so; it is adjuration by God. To ask one another by God is an allegorical expression alluding to the reverence and love they have for God, because man swears by only that which he respects and loves.

As for the word, "and relationship", the conjunctive apparently joins it to the name "God." Thus it would mean fear God and (be mindful of) relationship. Another explanation joins it to the pronoun "whom" which is in position of accusative; it gets support from Ḥamzah's recital (*wa al-arḥāmi*) whereby the last letter "m" is recited with the vowel point "i" [instead of the "a" which is the more common recital] to make it conform with the joint pronoun "whom"—although the grammarians do not give much credence to such construction. However, in this case the meaning would be as follows: and fear God by whom and by the relationship you ask one of another your rights; you say to one another, I ask you by God, and I ask you by the relationship. This was the explanation given by some

people, but the context and the Qur'anic style in general do not agree with it: If "relationship" is treated as an independent *al-ṣilah* (syntactic relative clause) of the relative pronoun *al-ladhī* (he who, that which), then the reconstructed sentence will be as follows: and fear God, He who, by relationship you ask one of another; this construction omits the pronoun "by whom", which is not correct. And if the whole phrase beginning with "God" is taken together as one *al-ṣilah*, [fear God by whom and by the relationship] then it would make relationship equal to God in majesty and grandeur, and it is totally against the Qur'anic etiquette.

Of course, there is no harm if one is told to fear God and be mindful of relationship in the same breath, because the preceding sentence has clearly shown the relationships as a creation of God. Also, *al-taqwā* (guarding against, piety, fear) has also been attributed in divine speech to others than God. For example:

And fear an affliction which may not smite those of you in particular who are unjust [8:25]; *And fear the day in which you shall be returned to Allah* [2:281]; *And guard yourselves against the fire which has been prepared for the unbelievers* [3:131].

In any case, this section of the speech coming after the first part (*O people! fear … and women*) is a sort of particularization after generalization, a restriction after liberalization. The first part in effect says: Fear God because He is your Lord and because He has created and made you, O people! from one root that is preserved in your being, from one substance that is preserved and propagated through your propagation; and it is the species known as humanity. On the other hand, the second part implies as follows: Fear God because you believe in His majesty and Power (and it is an aspect of His Lordship, and one of its concomitants); and remain mindful of the unity of relationship which He has created in you (and relationship is a branch of unity and an aspect of the essence that permeates all the human beings).

It shows why the order to fear God has been repeated in the second sentence. The second sentence itself is a repetition of the first with an additional import: It throws full light on the importance of relationship.

al-Riḥm means uterus, womb, the internal reproductive organ of a woman, whose function is to develop the sperm into a child. Then they began using it for relationship, because of the association between a receptacle and its content, as the relatives issue forth from the same womb. *al-Riḥm* therefore is relative, plural *al-arḥām* (relatives). The Qur'an has

given full importance to relationship as it has done to the community and nation. Relationship is a small society, while nation is a big one. The Qur'an has concerned itself with the affairs of society, and has counted it as a reality having its own special characteristics and effects. Likewise, it has concerned itself with the affairs of individual man, and has counted him as a reality having its own characteristics and effects which spring from his existence. God says:

And He it is Who has made two seas to flow freely, the one sweet that subdues thirst by its sweetness, and the other salt that burns by its saltness; and between the two He has made a barrier and inviolable obstruction. And He it is Who has created man from the water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage-relationship, and your Lord is powerful [25:53–54]; *… and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other …* [49:13]; *… and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of Allah to inheritance …* [33:6]; *But if you held command, you were sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship* [47:22]; *And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account …* [4:9].

There are many other verses of the same import.

… surely Allah is vigilant over you: *al-Raqīb* (means, guard; preserve); *al-murāqabah* (to watch; to keep an eye on); may be it is derived from *al-raqabah* (neck) because they used to watch the necks of their slaves. Or it may be based on the fact that a watcher or guard usually stretches his neck for looking towards the object he is watching or guarding. However, this word does not imply mere watching or guarding; it means watching over activities of the watched person—all his acts of commission and omission—in order to reform the defects and make up the deficiencies, or just to keep the record; in other words, it implies guarding a thing with special concern towards it in knowledge and observation. That is why it is used for vigilance, observation, supervision, guarding, awaiting and controlling. God is called *al-Raqīb* because He preserves the actions of the people in order to give them their recompense. He says:

… and your Lord is the Preserver of all things [34:21];

… Allah watches over them, and you have no charge over them [42:6].

Therefore your Lord let fall upon them the whip of chastisement. Most surely your Lord is on watch [89:13–14].

Look at the command of being mindful of humanity's unity (which pervades each and every human being) and of preserving its

characteristics; and note that this order is followed by the reminder that God watches everything. Then you will appreciate the great threat it poses, and the ominous warning it gives to the transgressors. Also, if you ponder on this reality, you will realize that all the verses dealing with the topics of transgressing the limit, oppressing the people, doing mischief in the land, exceeding the bounds and things like that (and which generally have prescribed such harsh and painful chastisement for the offenders) have very strong connection with the divine purpose, that is, protecting the humanity's unity from disorder, decline and fall.

How old the Human Species Is: The First Man

The Jewish history says that the present human species is not older than seven thousand years[1]; and contemplation supports this view.

Let us suppose there is a pair of a man and a woman, and that they live an average span of life in average health and average environment so far as peace, food production, comfort and other factors affecting human life are concerned. They are married and produce children in average environment and condition. Then we repeat exactly the same cycle of events for the said children—males and females—all in an average way. We will find that in a hundred years the original population of two will increase to one thousand persons; in other words, one person will beget about five hundred souls in a hundred years.

Then we look at the adverse factors affecting a human life, the general calamities with which he is faced, example—heat and cold, flood and earthquake, draught and famine, plague and epidemics, landslide and avalanche, massacres and genocide, and other unusual general catastrophes. Let us suppose that these disasters take their full toll of the human population until nine hundred and ninety-nine are dead and only one out of the thousand offspring remains. It means that reproduction would increase the population at the rate of 50% in a hundred years—the original two with addition of one (1000-999) becomes three in a century.

If we compute the original two at this rate of seven thousand years (seventy centuries), we will arrive at a total of more than two and a half

1 Note: In the first edition of this volume, the Translator has objected with reasons to the author's reliance on the Old Testament in deciding the age of the human species. However we have omitted his objection in this edition. (Pub.)

billion—and it is the total human population these days—as the world census indicates.[1]

This contemplation supports the above-mentioned age of the human race. But the geologists say that the age of this species exceeds million of years. They have found human fossils, bodies and artifacts which are older than five hundred thousand years, as they have estimated. This is in short their proof. But they have not produced any satisfactory evidence to show that this present generation is continuously descended from those ancient groups and vanished races. Is it not possible that a certain race appeared on this earth, reproduced, increased and inhabited the land for a time and then vanished, became extinct? Then in the same way other races appeared and vanished? This cycle could have been repeated several times until this race of ours appeared after all the previous extinct ones.

As for the Holy Qur'an, it does not say clearly whether the appearance of this species is confined to this present cycle (which we are passing), or there were various cycles of which this one is the latest. Although it may be inferred from the verse 30 of Chapter 2 (*And when your Lord said to the angels, "Verily l am going to make in the earth a vicegerent," they said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood …"*) that there had passed on the earth a cycle of humanity before this one of ours; and we had hinted to it in the Commentary of the said verse.

Of course, some traditions narrated from the Imāms of the Ahlu al-bayt show that there have passed many cycles of humanity before this cycle [which has begun with Adam]; and we shall quote them under "Traditions"

The Present Human Race Begins with Adam and His Wife

It is sometimes said: Human beings are of different colors, the main ones being the white (example—the color of Europeans and Asians living in the Temperate zones), the black (example, the color of the people in the southern Africa), the yellow (like that of the Chinese and the Japanese), and the red (as that of the American Red Indians). This difference shows that the origin of each race is different from that of the others—people of each color have separate origin—because color difference emanates from difference in the nature and composition of their respective bloods.

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1 At the time of compiling this second edition (year 2021), the current world population sits at 7.9 billion. (Pub.)

Accordingly there must have been at least four different and independent pairs of human beings from which the four color groups have originated.

It is also argued that when the Western Hemisphere was discovered, it was already inhabited by human beings. There was such a great distance between them and the people living in the Eastern Hemisphere as to render any contact between the two groups impossible; and thus ruled out the possibility of both groups originating from the same father and the same mother.

Comment: But both these arguments are defective:

Let us look at the question of difference in blood because of color difference. Scientific discussions nowadays are based on the theory of the evolution of species. If so, then how can we be sure that the difference in blood—and consequently in color—is not caused by evolution or adaptation in a single species. They believe that there had been many changes in various animal species, example—horse, goat, sheep, elephant and many others. Research has unearthed many geological remains and fossils which throw light on it. Apart from that, scientists today do not give so much importance to this difference.[1]

Coming to the question of human presence across the oceans, the scientists say that the human life has existed for millions of years; the transmitted history however does not go further back than six thousand years. In this background, could not some events have taken place in prehistoric days which would have separated the Western Hemisphere from other continents? There are many geological findings which show many basic changes that have appeared in the crust of the Earth extending to far distant eras. Oceans have turned into dry lands and vice versa; plains have become mountains and mountains, plains. Even the Poles are said to have turned upside down, and various zones to shift places. All this may be learnt from geology, astronomy and geography. Keeping all this in view, all that remains for these people to fall back upon is their feeling of improbability!

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it says in an apparent, nay rather clear-cut, way that this present human race goes back to one male and one female, who were the father and the mother respectively of all the human

1 It was published recently in the magazines that some doctors have discovered a medical formula which changes man's skin color, example, from black to white. (Auth.)

individuals. The father is named by God in the Qur'an as Adam, but his wife is not named in His Book, although the traditions call her Ḥawwāʾ, as does the present Torah. God says:

… and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract, of water held in light estimation [32:7–8];

Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be", and he was [3:59];

And when your Lord said to the angels, "Verily I am going to make in the earth a vicegerent;" they said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?" He said: "Surely I know what you do not know." And He taught Adam the names, all of them [2:30–31];

When your Lord said to the angels: "Surely I am going to create a man from dust: So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him " [38:71–72].

The verses, as you see, make it clear that the system made by God for continuation of this species is by means of sperm. But when He brought him into being for the first time, he was created from dust; Adam was created from dust and the people are his children. There is no doubt therefore that this species, going back, ends at Adam and his wife—although other interpretations could be advanced for these verses.

Also sometimes it is claimed that the word, Adam—in the verses of creation and prostration—signifies not an individual, but the species. According to them, man has been called Adam because his creation originates from the earth and because he is the means of procreation and impregnation. Sometimes support is sought for it from the verse: *And certainly We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam"* [7:11]. The argument runs as follows: The verse indicates that the angels were ordered to prostrate before the same whom God had created and fashioned, and the beginning of the verse (*And certainly We created you, then We fashioned you*) shows that it refers to the whole mankind [as it uses plural pronouns], not to a particular human being. The same idea is inferred from the following verse: *He said: "O Iblīs! what prevented thee that thou shouldst not obeisance to him whom I created with My two hands?. " He said: "I am better than he; Thou hast created me of fire, and him Thou didst create of dust." … He said: "Then by Thy Might, I will surely beguile them, all, except Thy servants among them, the purified one"* [38:75–83]. It is pointed out that the same Adam who in the beginning

is mentioned by singular pronouns, is then referred to with plural ones.

But this view is totally untenable, as it goes against the obvious meanings of the verses quoted above. Moreover, God says in the Chapter Seven, after narrating the story of Adam, prostration of the angels and refusal of Iblīs: *O children of Adam! let not the Satan cause you to fall into affliction as he got your parents out from the garden, pulling off from them both their clothing that he might expose to them both their shame* [7:27]. The verse [by using dual pronouns] clearly establishes the individual identity of Adam, in a way that leaves no room for any doubt.

Then there are the verses 61–62 of the Chapter 17: *And when We said to the angels: "Make obeisance to Adam;" they made obeisance, but Iblīs (did it not). He said: "Should I make obeisance to him whom Thou hast created of dust?" He said: "Tell me, is this he whom Thou hast honored above me? If Thou shouldst respite me to the Day of Resurrection, I will most certainly cause his progeny to perish except a few."* Likewise the verse under discussion makes it abundantly clear: *O people! fear your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women,* as we have already explained.

These verses, as you see, refute the idea that man has been called Adam, in one respect, and 'son of Adam' in another. Likewise they refuse to ascribe the creation to the dust from one angle and to the sperm from the other. It applies even more particularly to the verse like 3:59: *Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be", and he was.* Otherwise, the argument of the verse will not stand that Jesus' creation was something exceptional, against the normal process.

Thus the view that "Adam" refers to the human species is inordinately extreme. The opposite extreme is the view that it is *al-kufr* (disbelief) to say that more than one Adam had been created. This extreme was held by the Sunnī scholar, Zayn al-ᶜArab.

Mankind is an Independent Species not Evolved from any Other Species

The earlier quoted verses have already decided this question. They have made it clear that the present species, which is propagated through sperm, ends at Adam and his wife, and that they two were created of earth. The human species begins with them and they were not connected with any other analogous or resembling species. Theirs was an original creation.

The theory prevalent today among the scientists is that the first man evolved [from a lower species] and developed into homo sapiens, that is, human being. Although the particular hypothesis is not definitely and unreservedly agreed upon, and is the target of many objections which may be seen in relevant books, yet the basic theory, that man is an animal that evolved into human being, is accepted by them and constitutes the basis of all research in human nature.

According to their theory, the earth, one of the planets in the solar system, was a part of the sun, which had separated from it; it was then a mass of burning molten liquid which gradually began to cool under the influence of cooling factors. Torrential rains poured on it, heavy floods inundated it, mass of water collected as oceans. Water and earth reacted to each other; algae appeared; aquatic plants continued to develop; its living cells evolved into fish and other aquatic animals; then came flying fish adapted for both water and land; it gradually evolved into land animals, which in their turn developed into homo sapiens. All this happened through evolution: the lower order of life developed into the next higher one, and so on. First there were simple cells, then came aquatic plants, then aquatic animals, then amphibious animals, then land animals and finally man.

This theory is based on observation: One finds systematic gradual perfection in creatures placed on evolutionary rungs, graduating from imperfection to perfection in ascending order. Also, they argue on the basis of experiments which have created partial changes.

This theory was invented to explain the new characteristics and faculties which appear more developed and advanced in each succeeding species. But no proof has been given to show that only this theory is correct and others were untenable. After all, these species could possibly have been created separate from each other, without any evolutionary connection between them. Also, the changes occurring in a species might be limited to its conditions and concomitants, not to its person; the experiments done in this field are all confined to the concomitants. Experiments have not found or produced a single individual in all these species that would have actually changed from one species to another, example—from ape into homo sapiens. All these experiments touch only some characteristics or concomitants.

Detailed discussion of this topic should be sought somewhere else. Our aim is only to show that it is just a hypothesis which was invented

to answer some problems concerned, without there being any definite argument or clear-cut proof. The reality that the Qur'an points to—that man is a species separate from all other species—remains undisputed by an academic argument.

How Man's Second Generation Procreated

The first "generation" of man—Adam and his wife—procreated by marriage and begot sons and daughters who were brothers and sisters to one another. The question is: How did this second generation procreate? Did the brothers and sisters marry one another? Or was there any other way? As we have explained before, the verse, *and spread from these two, many men and women*, with its unreserved apparent meaning, shows that the present generation of man ends on Adam and his wife, and no other male or female had joined them in this process. The Qur'an has not attributed "the spreading" except to these two; if anyone else would have shared in it, the verse would have said: and spread from these two and from others than them; or would have used some other suitable words. And we know that the restriction of the origin of this race to Adam and his wife means that their sons had married their daughters.[1]

Of course, such marriage is prohibited in Islam, and also reportedly in previous shariah. But it is a legislative order based [like all such rules] on benefits or harms, it is not a creative decree which does not admit any change; its rein is the hand of God, He does what He pleases and orders what He intends. It is possible that He should allow it one day because it was then necessary, and prohibit it thereafter because the need was fulfilled, and if that permission were allowed to remain, it would have created indecency in the society.

It is said that it is against the nature, and what God had given to His prophets was the natural religion. God says: *Then set your face uprightly for religion in the natural devotion (for the truth), the nature made by God in which He has made men; there is no alteration in the creation of God; that is the right religion* [30:30]. But this argument is wrong; when nature

1 It should be noted here that the translator has objected the author's view about how the second generation of man procreated and has given a very detail explanation of his views and objection in the first edition of this volume under footnotes. However, we decided to omit his objection in this second edition because we think that it is not appropriate to counter the author's views in the same book but it should be done in a different book and format. (Pub.)

rejects it and exhorts against it, it does not do so because it thinks such sexual intercourse (between brother and sister) loathsome; it does so rather because it would lead to increase in indecency and reprehensible behavior, which in its turn would nullify the instinct of chastity and erase decency from human society. We know that today this type of relationship and sexual intercourse is considered debauchery and immoral throughout the world. But imagine a time when God's creation consisted of only brothers and sisters, and divine will intended to increase and spread them; we cannot apply today's norms on that society.

The evidence, that nature does not eschew such relations because of any instinctive aversion, may be found in Zoroastrian society which, according to history, practised such marriages for a long time; and in Russia where it is reportedly legalized; also in the fact that in Europe incest is widespread.[1]

It is sometimes said that such relation is against natural laws—the laws which guided man before he established a good society to ensure his happiness; it is because familiarity and constant mingling within family circle negates the sexual inclination and desire between brothers and sisters—as has been said by some experts of law.[2]

This argument too is defective, because:

First, the premises are not correct, as we have explained just now;

Second, its putative undesirability is confined to a situation where it is not essentially required; and

Third, it is restricted to a time when there are no legislated unnatural laws to safeguard the essential well-being of society, to ensure the happiness of its members. Otherwise, most of the laws and principles, that governs the lives and are prevalent today, are unnatural.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣādiq said in a hadith, inter alia; "Perhaps you think that God had not created any man other than you? Certainly, by God, God had created a million Adams; you are at the end of those human

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1 Nowadays, it is very common in civilized nations of Europe and America for the girls to lose their virginity before they are legally married, or even before they reach the age of marriage; available data shows that some of them are deflowered by their fathers or brothers. (Auth.)

2 Montesquieu: *The Spirit of the Laws.* (Auth.)

beings." (*al-Tawḥīd*)

Author's comments: Ibn Maytham has quoted in his Sharḥ Nahju al-balāghah, a tradition to the same effect from al-Bāqir, and al-Ṣadūq has narrated it in *al-Khiṣāl* too.

(2) al-Ṣādiq has said: "Surely God has created twelve thousand worlds, each of those worlds is greater than the seven heavens and the seven earths. None of (those) worlds thinks that God has got any other world." (*al-Khiṣāl*)

(3) Abū Jaʿfar has said: "Surely God had created in the earth—since He created it—seven worlds; they were not from the children of Adam; He created them from the surface of the earth, then He placed them in it one after another with its world. Then God, the Mighty, the Great, created Adam, the father of mankind, and created his progeny from him"(*ibid.*)

(4) al-Sahybānī narrates from ʿAmr b. Abi al-Miqdām, from his father that he said: "I asked Abū Jaʿfar: 'From what did God create Ḥawwāʾ?' He said: 'What do these people say?' I said: 'They say that God created her from one of the ribs of Adam.' He said: 'They have said a lie. Was God incapable of creating her from (something) other than his ribs?' I said: 'May I be made your ransom, from what did He create her?' He said: 'My father informed me through (the chain of) his fathers that the Messenger of God said: "Verily, God, Blessed and High is He, took a handful of dust and mixed it with His right hand—and both His hands are right—and created Adam from it; and there remained (some) residue from the dust, so He created Ḥawwāʾ from it." ' " (*Nahj al-bayān*)

Author's comments: A similar tradition has been narrated by al-Ṣaduq from ʿAmr. There are some other traditions to the effect that she was created from the shortest left rib of Adam. The same thing is said in Chapter 2, of the Genesis. Although this story is not impossible in itself, but as we have explained earlier, it is not proved by the Qurʾanic verses.

(5) A tradition given in *al-Iḥtijāj* quotes a talk of al-Sajjād with a Qurayshite, in which the Imam is said to describe how Hābīl was married to Lawzā, sister of Qābīl, and Qābīl to Iqlīmā, sister of Hābīl. Then the tradition continues: "The Qurayshite asked him: 'Did they beget from them?' He said: 'Yes.' The Qurayshite said: 'But this is what the Majūs do today?' He said: 'Surely the Majūs are doing it after God has prohibited (it).' Then he explained: 'Do

not deny it. These were but divine laws which were enforced. Was it not that God created Adam's wife from him, and then made her lawful to him? Thus it was a shariah from their commandments; then God sent down the prohibition after that …' " (*al-Iḥtijāj*)

Author's comments: What has been narrated in this tradition agrees with the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and with contemplation. There are other traditions which oppose this theme. They say that they had married with houri and jinn that had been sent to them. But you have seen what the truth is.

(6) al-Bāqir said about the words of God: *and fear God by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (be mindful of) relationship*: "And be mindful of relationship lest you severe it." (*Majmaᶜ al-bayān*)

Author's comments: This explanation is based on [the usual] recital, that is, with vowel point "a" on the last letter "m" of *al-arḥāma*.

(7) Another tradition: "It refers to people's relationship; verily God, the Mighty, the Great, has ordered to join it and has shown its greatness. Don't you see that He has placed it with Himself?" (*al-Kāfī*; *al-Tafsīr*, al-Ayyāshī)

Author's comments: The Imām's words (Don't you see …?) explain how God has shown its greatness; "He has placed it with Himself": These words refer to the joint mentioning in the verse; *and fear God … and relationship*.

(8) ᶜAbd b. Ḥamīd has narrated from ᶜIkrimah that Ibn ᶜAbbās said about the verse, … *by Whom you demand one of another (your rights) and (be mindful of) relationship*: "The Messenger of God said: God, the High, says: "Join your relationship, because it is more preserving to you in this life and good for you in your hereafter." ' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: The words, "it is more preserving to you", point to what has been said in nearly *mutawātir* traditions that joining the relationship, that is, behaving lovingly towards relatives, increases the life; while its opposite shortens it. Its reason may possibly be understood from the forthcoming Commentary of the verse, *And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account …* [4:9]

Possibly the statement, that joining the relationship is more preserving, means that it is its natural effect to preserve life longer. This good behavior strengthens the family ties and revitalizes the unity found in the clan; in

this way man gets courage and strength to face the adverse conditions of life—the misfortunes, afflictions and enemies—which might otherwise poison the spring of life.

(9) al-Aṣbagh b. Nubātah said: "I heard the Leader of the faithful (ʿAlī) saying: 'Surely one of you becomes angry and (then) is not conciliated until he enters the fire. Therefore, whoever of you becomes angry with his relative, should get closer to him, because womb (relationship), when touched by womb (relationship), calms down; and it is suspended from the Throne; it rings (the Throne) as iron is rung [by striking at it], and cries out: "O God! join him who joins me and cut him off who cuts me off": And it is the words of God in His Book: *and fear Allah by Whom you demand one of another (your rights) and (be mindful of) relationship, surely Allah is vigilant over you.* And who over becomes angry while he is standing, should at once cling to the earth [that is, should sit down], as it removes the filth of the Satan.' " (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: The "womb", as you have seen, refers to that unity which is found between individuals inasmuch as they share the same life substance originating from the same father and mother (or from one of them). The relationship is a real and factual aspect running through all the relatives; it has real effects—on character and appearance, on psyche and body. These effects are undeniable, although at times some contrary factors may weaken its force, they may even nullify those effects to almost extinction point—but they can never be erased altogether.

In any case, relationship is one of the most potent causes of natural harmony among family members; it has overpowering ability to effect [their psyche and behavior]. That is why a good done to a relative brings far better and firmer results than the one done to a stranger. Likewise, ill behavior of a relative hurts the feelings more grievously than it does in case of strangers.

The reason behind the order, "whoever of you becomes angry with his relative, should get closer to him …", may be understood from the above explanation. When one would go closer to a relative—in obedience to this order and to strengthen its effect—one would naturally be awakened to its cause [that is, relationship which binds them together], and its effect would be revived—the anger would change into kindness and love.

Also clear is the import of the last sentence: "And whoever becomes

angry while he is standing, should at once sit down." Anger is a product of the spirit's rashness and fickleness. It comes to surface and flares up because of passion—as then the Satan makes it oblivious (of reality) and turns its attention to imaginary and trivial matters. If an angry man sits down, he turns his attention to a new position, focusing his mind to a new activity. It would divert him from the anger and rage, because human soul by nature is more inclined to mercy than to anger. That is why some traditions direct a man to change his position if he feels angry.

(10) al-Ṣādiq narrated from his father that, talking about anger, he said: "Surely man becomes angry so much so that he is never conciliated, and because of it he enters the fire. Therefore, any man who feels anger while he is standing should sit down, as it would surely remove the Satan's filth from him; and if he is sitting, he should stand up; and any man who becomes angry on a relative, should go to him, get near him and touch him—because when relationship touches relationship it quiets down." (*al-Majālis*)

Author's comments: Its effect is a phenomenon perceived and experienced. The words of the Imām, "and it is suspended from the Throne; it rings (the Throne) as iron is rung [by striking at it]" mean: it causes it to sound as a bell is rung by striking at it. *al-Ṣiḥāḥ* says: *al-Inqāḍ* (sounding like banging or striking)." We have hinted when speaking about the Chair (and more details will be given in the talk on the Throne) that the Throne is the level of the general [divine] knowledge which is related to the events; it is that stage of existence where various expediencies, different influences and creative causes converge. It alone moves the chains of various causes and influencing factors; it is the motive force that pervades the whole system and keeps it running, as the affairs of a kingdom—with its various aspects, forms and conditions—are attached to the king's throne, and a single word spoken by him moves the chains of authority and effects the whole bureaucracy throughout the kingdom; its effects appear everywhere in appropriate forms and shapes.

The womb or relationship, as you have seen, is in fact a spirit pervading the personalities of all those who share a common lineage. As such, this too is attached to the Throne. When it is subjected to injustice and oppression, it seeks protection and help from the Throne to which it is attached. It is this reality which the Imām alludes to when he says: "It rings the Throne as iron is rung." It is a very fine and original simile; it describes the effect of its cry for help on the Throne as the ringing of a

bell; when a bell is rung, the vibration permeates its whole being and the sound comes out reverberating as it it were trembling.

The reported prayer, "O God! join him who joins me and cut him off who cuts me off", is the interpretation of its mute expression—which it would have said had it had a tongue.

It has been emphasized in numerous traditions that joining the relationship prolongs the life, and severing it decreases it. We have already described in the second volume, when writing on the relation between actions and natural phenomena[1] under the heading, "An essay on the rules governing actions", that the Administrator of this universe is driving it to an excellent goal and a good destination; He will not ignore or neglect its well being. If one or more parts of it go wrong, he rectifies the situation, either by repairing the parts or removing and discarding them. The man who cuts his relationship off, actually wages a war against God in His creation. If he refuses to mend his ways, God cuts his life short and destroys him.

The fact that man today does not perceive this or other similar realities, does not diminish its importance. Today, humanity's body is so much affected by moral depravity and spiritual diseases that it has lost its sense, feeling and perception; the sickness has numbed and paralysed the whole system, and man is no more able or free to feel the pain or realize the chastisement.

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1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 3. (Trans.)

Verses 2-6

The verses are part of the prologue which began with the first verse. The aim is to pave the way for the laws of inheritance and basic rules of marriage like the number of wives allowed and the women within prohibited degree. These two are among the greatest and most important laws governing human society; and they have profound effect on its formation and continuation. Matrimony controls affinity and genealogy of society members, and deeply affects other constituent factors. Inheritance regulates the distribution of wealth existing in the world—the factor on which a society depends for its life and continuity.

As an essential condition, the chapter prohibits fornication and illicit sexual relations, and forbids devouring others' property unlawfully—except that it be a trade deal with the parties' consent. In this way two fundamental principles have been established for regulating the two most important aspects of society, that is, the subjects of affinity and property.

We may now understand why it was necessary to prepare the minds before promulgating the laws for these subjects which concerned the whole society and which were enmeshed with the roots of the social system. It is really not an easy thing to divert the people from the social norms which they are accustomed to and which have nurtured their ideas and ideals; to make them discard the systems which they grew up believing in, and which the generations of ancestors had sanctified by faithful adherence; to cast off the customs and traditions which had moulded their character and outlook.

It was in this difficult situation that the laws revealed at the beginning of this chapter were promulgated. It may easily be appreciated if we look just briefly at the world's situation at that time, and particularly at the condition of Arabia—the place of the revelation of the Qur'an and rise of Islam. Also, it will make it clear why the Qur'an was sent down piecemeal, and why the Islamic laws were promulgated gradually.

The Era of Ignorance

The Qur'an calls the pre-Islamic days of Arabia the Era of Ignorance. It is a clear indication that at that time they were in the grip of ignorance,

and knowledge was a thing alien to them. Falsehood ruled over them, and truth was an unknown commodity. This fact appears from what the Qur'an describes of them. God says: *they entertained about Allah, thoughts of ignorance quite unjustly* [3:154]; *Is it then the judgment of (the times of) ignorance that they desire?* [5:50]; *When those who disbelieve harboured in their hearts chauvinism, the chauvinism of (the days of) ignorance* [48:26]; *and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of you* [33:33].

At that time, Arabia was surrounded by three big powers: In the south ruled Christian Ethiopia; the west lorded over by the Romans, again a Christian Empire; in the north was Fars, the Zoroastrian Empire. At some distance were India and Egypt, both idol-worshippers. There were also a few tribes of the Jews in Arabia. However, the Arabs were idolaters and most of them lived tribal life. All this together had created a barbaric nomadic society that had some traces of Judaism, Christianity and Mazdaism—and they were intoxicated of their ignorance. God says: *And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allah's way; they follow but conjecture and they only (falsely) guess* [6:116].

The nomadic tribes, with their despicable and miserable lives, lived on foray and plunder; they forcibly seized others' property and tarnished their honor. There was neither safety nor integrity, neither peace nor security. The authority belonged to whoever subdued others, and the scepter of power to whoever snatched it.

As for the menfolk, their superiority and excellence consisted of bloodshed and chauvinism of ignorance; pride and hauteur; cooperation with the oppressors and devouring the rights of the oppressed; mutual antagonism and rivalry; gambling games, intoxicating drinks and illicit sexual relations; and feasting on dead animals, blood, and inferior quality dates.

As for the women, they were deprived of every privilege of society. They had no will of their own, nor did they possess any of their work. They had no right in inheritance; and men married as many of them as they liked; the position was the same as with the Jews and some idolaters: there was no limit to the number of the wives. On the other hand, they appeared in public adorned with fineries, inviting to themselves anyone who caught their fancy. Fornication and adultery was their morality; their love of displaying themselves sometimes led them to go on pilgrimage completely naked.

As for the children, they were affiliated to their fathers, but the minor ones had no share in inheritance, which was taken away by the elder ones and the widow was a part of the inheritance. In short, the minor children—both male and female—and the women did not inherit.

Of course, if the deceased left only a minor, he inherited him, but an elder relative acting as his guardian devoured the orphan's property; and if it was a daughter, he took her as his wife, swallowed her property and divorced her; she was thus left in the lurch: neither she had any money to live on nor there was anyone willing to marry and maintain her. Most of the time there were problems concerning one orphan or the other, because the chains of wars, battles and forays were unending, and consequently people lost their lives like flies.

One of the misfortunes fatally affecting their children was the country's terrain—a desolate desert and barren wasteland, where famine and hunger were norms of the day. Therefore, people killed their children for fear of poverty (vide 6:151); and buried their daughters alive (vide 81:78); to them the most disgusting thing was the news of the birth of a daughter (vide 43:17).

As for their governmental system, sometimes some rulers established their monarchies in the periphery of Arabian peninsula under protection or suzerainty of some strongest neighboring power, for example, under Iran in the northern region, and under Rome and Ethiopia in the western and southern regions, respectively. Yet the central towns, that is, Mecca, Yathrib and Ṭā'if, etc., lived under a system which was the nearest thing to democracy—but it was not exactly that. The tribes in the desert, and even in the towns, were ruled by oligarchies of chiefs and shaykhs, which sometimes changed into monarchy.

This was the chaotic muddle which appeared in every group in a new color, in every quarter in a new form—with all the strange myths and superstitious rites prevalent among them. Add to it the scourge of ignorance and lack of teaching and learning that blighted their towns, let alone the nomadic tribes.

All that we have mentioned above concerning the prevailing conditions, activities, customs and rites, may be clearly inferred from the context of the Qur'anic verses which it has addressed to them. Just ponder on the themes of the verses revealed at Mecca and then of those revealed after the triumph of Islam at Medina; then look at the characteristics it attributes to them, the affairs it criticizes and blames them for, the prohibitions of

various customs and habits—with varying degrees of stricture. If you meditate on these lines, you will see the truth of what we have described above. Of course, the history records all these things in detail, but we have not given their specifics, because the verses have not gone into detailed description. The shortest, yet most comprehensive, word used to describe their situation was coined by the Qur'an when it called that period, 'the era of ignorance'. All the details are compressed in this name. So, this was the situation in the Arab world in those days.

As for the countries surrounding them like Rome, Fars, Ethiopia, India, etc., the Qur'an mentions them only briefly.

As for the People of the Book among them, that is, the Jews, the Christians and their fellows, their societies were controlled and managed by despotic desires and individual vagaries of the emperors, lords, officials and bureaucrats. Consequently, the society was divided in two classes:

(1) The ruling class which was powerful; it did whatever it liked, and played with people's lives, honor and property;

(2) The subjects, enslaved and oppressed; they had no security for their property, honor or life, nor had they any freedom of will—except the freedom to agree with their overlords.

The ruling class had won over the religious scholars and the guardians of shariah and joined hands with them. In this way, it had captivated the masses' hearts and minds. This class was the real ruler that ruled over the religion of the people as well as their worldly life; it ruled over their religion as it thought expedient, through the tongues and pens of religious scholars; and over their worldly life with whip and sword.

The subjects, in their turn, were likewise divided in two strata, according to their strength and wealth (and people follow the system adopted by their rulers!). There was a class of wealthy people living in ease and luxury; and another of weak and poor as well as of slaves. The same was the situation within a household where the head of the family lorded over the women and children. Another division was between the males and the females: the men were privileged to have freedom of will and action in every walk of life while the women were deprived of it all; they were merely adjuncts of men; they served their men in all their (men's) whims, without having the least independence.

These historical facts may clearly be seen in miniature in the words of God: *Say: "O People of the Book! come to a word common between us and you that we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not*

associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah"; but if they turn back, then say: "Bear witness that we are submitting ones" [3:64]. The Prophet had included these words in his letter to Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, and also reportedly in those written to the kings of Egypt, Ethiopia and Fars as well as to the people of Najrān.

There are also other verses that throw light on their condition at that time. For example: *O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who guards himself most (against evil)* [49:13]. Also see the instruction concerning marriage with slave-girls and other believing maidens: … *you are (sprung) the one from the other; so marry them with the permission of their people* … [4:25]; and about the women in general: *That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other* … [3:195]; there are many other verses relevant to this topic.

As for others than the People of the Book, that is, the idol worshippers and those similar to them, their condition was more unfortunate and disastrous than the People of the Book. The verses revealed in rebuttal of their "arguments" show clearly how their endeavours had failed and their ambitions frustrated in all affairs of life and means of happiness. For example:

And certainly We did write in the Zabūr after the reminder that the earth, shall inherit it My righteous servants. Most surely in this is a message to a people who worship (Us). Say: "It is only revealed to me that your God is one God; will you then submit?" But if they turn back, say: "I have given you warning all alike … [21:105–109]; … *and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches* [6:19].

Islam Arrives on the Scene

So, this was the condition of human society at that time—in the era of ignorance; people were blissfully inclined to falsehood, and mischief and injustice dominated all aspects of life. It was in this situation that Islam, the religion of monotheism and truth, came on the scene. Its aim was to put scepter of power in the hand of truth and give it absolute authority over mankind, in order that their hearts might be cleansed of the filth of polytheism and their actions and activities be purified; the goal was to establish an ideal social order at a time when corruption and decay had completely destroyed its roots and shoots, its exterior and interior.

In short, God wished to guide them to the clear truth; He did not want to put any difficulty on them but He wished to purify them and that He might complete His favors on them. They were at that time steeped in falsehood, and Islam wanted them to join together on the word of truth. The two positions were poles apart, diametrically opposed to each other. What was Islam to do? Should it have tried to gain favor with a few people among them and then use them to reform other adherents of falsehood? Then use some to transform some others—all this in its eagerness to make the truth prevail in any way possible, through any means available? After all, people say: The end justifies the means—however objectionable it may be. It is the normal way of politics which the politicians always use.

This method seldom fails to achieve its aim—whatever the goal might be. But it is not suitable for arriving at the clear truth, which the Islamic call aims at. The end is obtained through its means, the result from its premises; how could a falsehood bring forth the truth, or a rotten tree bear good healthy fruits—when a child is a composite originating from its parents?

Politics desires and aspires to acquire authority and domination; to go ahead and enjoy the fruits of power, no matter how it is achieved, or whatever shape it takes—whether it is good or evil, whether it is based on truth or falsehood. But the mission of truth does not want any goal except the truth. If it were to achieve that goal through falsehood it would be a confirmation of falsity, and then it would no longer remain a mission of truth—it would become one of falsehood.

This reality clearly shines in the life histories of the Messenger of God and his purified progeny.

This was what the Lord ordered his Prophet; and which was reiterated by the Qur'an whenever the misguided people tried to tempt him to show some indulgence or go easy (even a little) in matters of religion. God says: *Say: "O unbelievers! I do not worship that which you worship, nor do you worship Him Whom I worship; nor am I going to worship that which you worship, nor are you going to worship Him Whom I worship; unto you be your religion and unto me my religion"* [109:1–6]. Also He says in a somewhat threatening tone: *And had it not been that We had already firmly established you, you would certainly have been near to incline to them a little; in that case We would certainly have made you to taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death* [17:74–75]. Again He says: … *nor could I take those who lead (others) astray for aiders* [18:51].

Also He says—and it is a parable of wide application: *And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (abundantly) by the permission of its Lord, and (as for) that which is bad (its herbage) comes forth but scantily* [7:58].

As the truth cannot mix with falsehood, God ordered the Prophet—when the mission's burden made him weary—to proceed gradually in this respect on three sides: concerning the mission itself, those to whom the call was addressed and the mode of approach.

First: Concerning the mission itself with all its true knowledge and ordained laws. These are intended to reform the society's condition and uproot the decay and depravity. As we know, it is extremely difficult to change people's ideas and beliefs, especially if they are enmeshed with their character and activities; if they have become the norms of the day, entrenched by passage of centuries, sanctified by convention of ancestors, faithfully followed by succeeding generations. The task becomes even more herculean if the religion which is intended to replace the ancient system is all-encompassing, if it covers all affairs of life and ordains laws for all human movements and stillness; if it looks at the exterior as well as the interior, at all times and for all individuals and societies without any exception—as the Islam does. It is a venture that boggles the minds and looks practically impossible.

The task is even harder and tougher in actions than in beliefs. Because man becomes familiar with customs and rites and becomes habituated to them long before he starts believing in any thing. Action is perceived by perceptions more clearly and is more closely attached to man's desires and cravings. That is why, in the beginning, the Mission announced only the true beliefs—and that too in general terms. It was later that it gradually unfolded the divine laws and rules one after another.

In short, Islam revealed its secrets, step by step, so that people do not balk at accepting them, and hearts do not tremble at stacking one rule upon another. This fact is clear to anyone who meditates on these realities. He will see a clear difference between Meccan and Medinite verses of the Qur'an, so far as exposition of divine knowledge and ordained laws is concerned. The Meccan verses call to the basic principles couched in general terms, while the Medinite ones (that is, those revealed after hijrah [emigration], wherever they might have been revealed) explain the matters and give the details of the commandments which were communicated in general or vague terms during Meccan period. God says: *Nay! man is most surely inordinate, because he sees himself free from want. Surely to*

your Lord is the return. Have you seen him who forbids a servant (of Allah) when he prays? Have you considered if he were on the Guidance, or enjoined guarding (against evil)? Have you considered if he (that is, this unbeliever) gives the lie to the truth and turns (his) back? Does he not know that Allah does see? [96:6-14]. These verses were revealed at the beginning of the Messengership after the Prophethood, as was mentioned in the second volume under the verses of the Fast[1] and they point out in general terms to the Oneness of God and the resurrection, as well as to piety and worship.

Also He says: *O you who are enwrapped! Arise and warn, and your Lord do magnify* [74:1–3]. These verses too were revealed at the beginning of the Call. Again He says: *And (I swear by) the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it, he will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it* [91:7–10]; *He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Lord and prays* [87:14–15]; *Say: "I am only a human being like you; it is revealed to me that your God is one God, therefore follow the right way to Him and ask His forgiveness"; and woe to the polytheists, who do not give zakāt and they are unbelievers in the hereafter. (As for) those who believe and do good, for them surely is a reward never to be cut off* [41:6–8]. All these verses were revealed during the early days of the Call.

Also God has said: Say: *"Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you—(remember) that you do not associate anything with Him and do good to (your) parents, and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty—We provide for you and for them—and do not draw near to indecencies, those of them which are apparent and those which are concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for (the requirements of) justice; this He has enjoined you with, that you may understand. And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner until he attains his majority; and give full measure and weight with justice—We do not impose on any soul a duty but according to its ability; and when you speak, then be just though it be (against) a relative, and fulfil Allah's covenant; this He has enjoined you with, that you may be mindful. And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His way; this He has enjoined you with, that you may guard (against evil)"* [6:151–153].

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1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 3. (Trans.)

Look at the style of these verses; how they speak about religious prohibitions in general terms, and also about religious commandments in the same manner. See how all prohibitions have been summarized in one word which even a layman's mind will not balk at, because no sane person will hesitate in admitting that "indecencies" are bad and man should desist from them. Likewise, no one can doubt that uniting on the straight path is a good thing, as it prevents division and weakness and protects the society from destruction and decay. The Qur'an in this way has appealed to the natural instincts of its audience. It is for this reason that some prohibited things have been described in detail, for example, disobedience of, and misbehavior towards the parents, killing the children for fear of poverty, unjustified slaying of a human being, devouring an orphan's property and other such things; human instinct supports this call because in normal conditions it balks from committing these sins and crimes. There are other verses of this type, and on meditation one will find the same style and the same condition in all of them.

In any case, the Meccan verses give only a general outline, details of which were filled by the Medinite ones; and the same gradual approach is seen within the Medinite verses themselves, because not all the religious laws and rules were sent down there at once—they were revealed little by little, step by step.

Only one example—mentioned earlier—will suffice here, and that is of the verses prohibiting the intoxicants. God said: *And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes—you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision* [16:67]. It is a Meccan revelation; it mentions intoxication and remains silent—except putting it vis-a-vis the phrase, "goodly provision", and thus hinting that intoxicants were not goodly provision. Then came another verse: Say: *"My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin"* [7:33]. This too belongs to the Meccan period; it prohibits "sin" clearly but does not say that drinking liquor is a sin. It treads softly, preparing the minds gradually to leave a bad habit to which they were pulled by their desires, and on which their flesh had grown and bones strengthened. Then came the Medinite verse: *They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and (some) profit for men; and their sin is greater than their profit"* [2:219]. The verse pointed out that drinking liquor was a sin which had earlier been prohibited by the verse 33 of the chapter seven. Yet, you may see that the language of the verse is advisory, its tone

gentle. Lastly it was revealed: *O you who believe! intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?* [5:90–91]. This verse revealed in Medina finally sealed the prohibition.

The same gradual approach is seen in the matter of inheritance. The Prophet first established brotherhood between his companions and ordained that one such brother would inherit from the other. It was in the beginning and the aim was to prepare the Muslims to readily accept the laws of inheritance which were soon to be promulgated. Then came the revelation: *and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of Allah to inheritance, one with respect to another, than (other) believers and (than) those who have fled (their homes)* [33:6]. It is this same consideration which is seen in many abrogated and abrogating verses.

In these and other similar matters, the Call went ahead step by step in promulgation and enforcement of the laws. It dealt with people gently in order that they might easily and gladly accept and obey the orders. God says: *And a Qur'an which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have sent it down in portions* [17:106]. If the Qur'an had been revealed to the Prophet all at once[1], he would have been obliged to explain the details of his shariah to the people (as the divine words clearly show: *and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them* [16:44]). Then it would have been necessary for him to describe in the very early day all the matters concerning the belief and ethics, as well as the whole set of the acts of worship and the rules regarding mutual dealings, social affairs, political matters, penal codes and other factors. Obviously, the minds at that time could not even imagine and tolerate such subjects, let alone accepting and practising them—and the shariah could never control their hearts (in their will and intentions) nor their limbs and bodies (in their actions). It was the gradual revelation which prepared the way for the religion to be accepted and to capture the hearts. God says: *And those who disbelieve say: "Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to*

1 This is not the same as the "essence of the Qur'an" which was revealed to the Prophet all at once and as attested in verse 185 of the second Chapter. (Pub.)

him all at once?" Thus, that We may strengthen your hearts by it and We have arranged it well in arranging [25:32]. This verse shows that God had intended the gradual revelation to be a kindness to His Messenger as well as to his *ummah*. Ponder on this point and especially on the last clause, *and We have arranged it well in arranging*.

It is necessary to point out here that proceeding from general to particular, and going step by step in promulgation of law—for using gentle approach towards people and training them effectively stage by stage, keeping the ultimate good before one's eyes—is completely different from compromise and indulgence; and this distinction, needs no elaboration.

Second: Gradual increase in the circle of people to whom the call is addressed. We know that the Prophet was sent to the whole mankind; his call was not meant for a particular nation to the exclusion of the others; nor was it confined to a specific time or place. (The latter clause in effect means the same as the former.) God says: *Say: "O people! surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth* [7:158]; *and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches* [6:19]; *And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds* [21:107].

Apart from that, the history records his invitations to the Jews (and they were Israelites) as well as the rulers of Rome, Persia, Abyssinia and Egypt, and they were non-Arabs. Among the well-known believers were Salmān (from Persia), his *muʾadhdhin*, Bilāl (from Abyssinia), and Ṣuhayb (from Rome). Thus the fact, that his prophethood was universal and meant for the whole world since his own days, is beyond doubt; the above quoted verses too are not confined to any time or place.

Also there are following two verses which prove universality of his prophethood and show that it is meant for all times and all places. God says: *and most surely it is a Mighty Book: Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One* [41:41–42]; *… but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the Prophets …* [33:40]. Detailed descriptions of these verses shall be given in their Commentaries.

In any case, his prophethood is all-encompassing and universal. If we ponder on the vast range of Islamic knowledge and laws, and see the condition the world was in, the day Islam came on the scene—the dark ignorance, the repulsive depravity and the filthy transgression—then we shall certainly realize that it was just impossible to face the whole world

at once, or to struggle against polytheism and depravity all at one go.

The reason demanded that, to begin with, the Call should be addressed to only a small portion of humanity—and that it should be the people of the Messenger of God himself. After they were well-imbued with religion, the Call could be extended to others—and that is what was done. God says: *And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly* [14:4]; *And if We had revealed it to any of the foreigners, so that he should have recited it to them, they would not have believed therein* [26:198–199]. The verses that imply some link between the Call and the Arabs, show only that they were included among those to whom the Call and the Warning were addressed. The same is the position of the verses which offer the Qur'an as a challenge to the mankind—if there were anything in them which implied the restriction of the challenge to rhetorics, then it would be just because rhetoric was one of the aspects of its miraculousness; it does not mean that the Call was confined to only the Arabs.

Of course, language by itself plays a very important role in communication and explanation, as has been described in several verses; for example: *And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly* [14:4]; *We narrate to you the best of narratives, by Our revealing to you this Qur'an* [12:3]; *And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your hearts, that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language* [26:192–195]. The Arabic language has unparalleled capacity of expressing the ideas and mental images in the most perfect style. That is why God selected it from among all languages for His Mighty Book, and said: *Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand* [43:3].

However, God ordered the Prophet, when he took up the Call, to begin with his nearest relations: *And warn your nearest relatives* [26:214]. The Prophet, obeying the command, gathered his relatives and called them to what he was sent with; he further promised them that the first one to answer his call would be his successor after him. ʿAlī answered his call; the Prophet appreciated his response while the others mocked him for it—as the correct traditions and books of history and biography have recorded[1]. Then other people from his family adhered to him, like his wife,

1 Vide *Biḥāru al-anwār* (vol. 6); *al-Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām and other books. (Auth.)

Khadījah, his uncle, Ḥamzah b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, ʿUbayd, and his uncle, Abū Ṭālib—as is recorded in Shīʿite traditions, and declared and implied in his own poems[1], (although he did not announce his acceptance of faith in order that he could continue protecting the Prophet).

Then God ordered him to extend the circle of the mission to the whole nation, as is shown by the following verses: *And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an, that you may warn the mother city* [that is, Mecca] *and those around it …* [42:7]; *that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, that they may follow the right direction* [32:3]; *and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches* [6:19]. This last verse is a clear proof that the Call was not confined to them, although it had begun with them for underlying benefits.

Lastly God ordered him to spread the Call to the whole world, to include followers of every religion and creed, as the earlier quoted verses show. See for example: *Say: "O people! surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all …"* [7:158]; *but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophets* [33:40]; and other verses quoted above.

Third: Proceeding step by step in calling and guidance as well as in enforcement of the law. [It has three stages:] Inviting them by word of mouth, passive resistance and *jihād*.

Invitation by Word: It is seen throughout the Qur'an, all by itself. God had directed the Prophet to pay regard to human dignity and observe good manners in his missionary activities. He says: *Say: "I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me …"* [18:110]; *… and make yourself gentle to the believers* [15:88]; *And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend* [41:34]; *And bestow not favors that you may receive again with increase* [74:6]. There are numerous verses of similar theme.

Also, God told him to use all methods and levels of explanation having regard to the understanding and mental capacity of the individuals. He says: *Call to the way of Thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner* [16:125].

Passive Resistance: It means that the believers were to cut themselves off from the unbelievers in their belief and activities. In this way there were to establish an Islamic social order unalloyed with any non-monotheistic

1 Vide *Dīwān* of Abū Ṭālib. (Auth.)

belief or non-Islamic action (example, sins and ethical shortcomings)—except mingling with non-Muslims to the extent required by dictates of life. God says:

Unto you be your religion and unto me my religion [109:6].

Stand fast then (in the right path) as you are commanded, as also he who has turned (to Allah) with you, and be not inordinate (O men!), surely He sees what you do. And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped [11:112–113];

To this then go on inviting, and go on steadfastly (on the right path) as you are commanded, and do not follow their low desires, and say: "I believe in what Allah has revealed of the Book, and I am commanded to do justice between you: Allah is our Lord and your Lord; we shall have our deeds and you shall have your deeds; no plea need there be (now) between us and you: Allah will gather us together, and to Him is the return" [42:15];

O you who believe! do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you o f the truth … Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from you homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust [60:1, 8–9].

There are numerous verses with the theme of keeping aloof and remaining separate from, and clear of, the enemies of religion; and as you see they explain the meaning of this aloofness, its method and its particulars.

Jihād: This subject has already been explained under the verses of *jihād* in the Chapter of The Cow.[1]

However, these three stages are the special feature and exclusive property of Islam. The first is inseparably included in the latter two, and the second in the third one. The Prophet, in all his battles, invariably always called the unbelievers to the right path and exhorted them to submit to the One God—before the hostilities started, as he was commanded by

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 3. (Trans.)

his Lord to do: *But if they turn back, say: "I have given you warning all alike"* [21:109].

One of the most vulgar charges against Islam is the cliche that it is a religion of sword, not of preaching.[1] The Qur'an, the biographies of the Prophet and the history, all together throw light on the reality, but "to whomsoever God does not give light, he has no light."

Many of these critics belong to a Church that had established the Inquisition and ran it for centuries to convict the so-called heretics and burn them alive—as if it were the divine court on the Day of Resurrection! Its agents roamed the Christian countries and caught and sent to the Inquisition whomsoever they accused of atheism or heresy—often it meant only having modem views in the fields of physics and mathematics which went against the "philosophy" of scholasticism propagated by the Church.

Would that I knew which was more important in the eyes of the reason: spreading the monotheism, uprooting idol-worship and cleansing the earth of depravity [as Islam did], or strangling a scholar who said that the earth revolved round the sun, or who denied the Ptolemaic sky.

Also, it was the Church that incited and agitated the Christian world against Islam, in the name of fighting against "idolatry." Thus began the wars known as Crusade which continued for about two hundred years; it devastated the regions, annihilated millions of lives and tarnished the dignity of countless women.[2]

There are other detractors, outside the Church, who are supposedly

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1 Interestingly the word "sword" does not appear as a revelation in the whole Qur'an. As the author later mentions, when the Muslims drew sword and took up arms against the unjust people, it used the force only to remove those who had become like stumbling blocks in the way of the Call of the truth but not to make them enter the fold of Islam. (Pub.)

2 The spirit of Crusade is still alive in Christiandom which, taking advantage of the Zionist movement and internal strifes of the Muslim world, has won the latest round of the battle by putting the State of Israel like a dagger in the heart of the Muslim land. After the Europe was devastated in the Second World War, the super powers have learned to fight their wars by proxy in the third world, example—in Korea, Vietnam and Nicaragua. Using the same principle, the Christians are now continuing the Crusade by proxy, through Israel. For the time being they have won the battle, but the war continues. (Trans.)

imbued with ideals of civilization and freedom. These are the very people who have no hesitation in detonating the fuse of world wars and turning the world upside down whenever they perceive some of their material interests threatened by a small danger. The question is: What is more disastrous to the mankind: Consolidation of polytheism in the world, moral decadence, lapse of virtue and suffocation of world with depravity and corruption? Or losing one's grip on a few yards of land or incurring loss of a few dollars? Yes, "certainly man is ungrateful to his Lord."

Here I would like to quote what one of the great scholars has written on this subject in one of his booklets. He says:

The methods used for reforming social order, uprooting injustice and establishing justice, and fighting against corruption and evil are almost confined to three categories:

(1) Methods of propagation and guidance through lectures, articles, books and publications. It is the noble way pointed to by God as He says in His Book: *Call to the way of Thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner.* Also, He says: *Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.* This was the method used by Islam in the beginning of the mission …

(2) Methods of peaceful and passive resistance, like demonstrations, strikes, economic boycott, and non-cooperation with the tyrants by remaining aloof from their services and governments. Believers in this method do not agree with methods of killing, war and violence. This is the way pointed out by God in His words: And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you. Again He says: Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends. There are a lot of verses in the Qur'an pointing to this method. Prominent among its advocates were the Indian prophet, Buddha and Jesus as well as the Russian writer, Tolstoy and the Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi.

(3) War, uprising and fighting.

Islam proceeds by degrees in these three methods. First comes good exhortation and peaceful invitation. If it fails to repulse the unjust people and to remove their corruption and despotism, then the second method is adopted, and that is peaceful boycott, passive resistance and non-cooperation with them, withholding all assistance from them. If this too proves ineffective, then the only alternative is the third one, that is, armed confrontation, because God is never pleased with injustice; and he who silently

agrees with an unjust person, is his partner in injustice.

Islam is a belief [system]. One who says that Islam was spread by sword and wars is completely mistaken and has crossed the limits of reason. Islam is a faith and belief, and faith cannot be created by compulsion and coercion; it comes from proofs and arguments. The Honored Qur'an announces this fact in many verses, example, *There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error* [2:256].

Even when Islam drew sword and took up arms against the unjust people (who had disregarded the divine communications and proofs), it used the force only to remove those who had become like stumbling blocks in the way of the Call of the truth. In other words, it used the arms to repel the enemies' mischief, not to make them enter the fold of Islam. God says: *And fight with them until there is no more mischief* [2:193]. Thus the fighting was resorted to, for erasing mischief, not for compelling them to accept the faith and religion.

Islam therefore does not wage war arbitrarily or by its own choice. It is the enemies who push it into a corner and then it has to resort to war. Even then it uses noble ways to fight. It has forbidden—both in war and in peace—destruction and arson, poisoning and cutting off water from enemy. Likewise, it prohibits killing of women, children or prisoners—instead it orders the Muslims to deal with them gently, to do good to them, no matter how much enmity and hatred towards the Muslims they might have shown. It disallows assassination in war and in peace, as well as killing aged men and women or him who had not participated in the war. It does not allow attacking the enemy at night; [*and if you fear treachery on the part of a people, then throw back to them on terms of equality* (8:58)]. It forbids killing someone just on suspicion, or punishing him before he has committed a sin. It has prohibited many such practices which are rejected by sense of nobility and ideals of manhood, and which spring from meanness and cruelty, vileness and barbarity.

All the above-mentioned deeds which Islam in its nobility refused to do against its enemies in any of its battles or wars, have been committed, in their most heinous form and in the most horrid way, by the "civilized" nations of this era—the [so called] era of enlightenment. Yes, this enlightened era has allowed massacre of women and children, old and sick; it practises night sorties, and attacks in middle of night with arms and bombs against defenceless civilians. In short, it has legalized murder in all its various shapes.

Did not Germany in World War II send rockets on London, demolishing the buildings and killing the women, children and civilian population? Did not they exterminate thousands of prisoners? And did not the Allies [in their turn] send thousands of bombers against Germany to destroy its cities and towns? Did not the U.S.A. drop atomic bombs on the Japanese towns?

Now that even more modern means of destruction have been invented, like the missiles and atomic and hydrogen bombs, nobody—except God—knows what disasters and destructions, tragedies and calamities would fall on the earth if a World War III were to erupt and the fighting parties resorted to these bombs[1]. May God guide the man to the right path and lead him to the straight way.[2]

Commentary

وَآتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ ۖ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

(4:2) ***And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime.***

It is an order to return to the orphans their property, and it paves the way for the next two sentences (*and do not substitute …, and do not devour*); or the latter two serve as explanation of the former. But as the

1 The nuclear arms race continues unabated, in spite of the pious verbal professions of the super powers to "limit" it. The U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. have amassed between themselves enough nuclear war-heads to pulverize the earth several times over. Now their attention is focused on colonizing the outer space and—even before that—on finding the ways to destroy it. They are rushing towards "Star War" when the majority of mankind (including millions of Americans and Russians) are either living below the poverty line or dying of starvation. God says: *Chaos has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done …* [30:41]. (Trans.)

2 al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn Kāshifu al-Ghiṭā', in his booklet: al-Muthulu al-'ulyā' fi al-Islām lā fī Baḥamdūn. (Auth.)

reason given at the end (this is surely a great crime) refers to the latter two or the last one sentence, it supports the view that the first sentence is put here as a prologue to the next two.

The main prohibition, that one should not use an orphan's property in a manner detrimental to his interest, in itself prepares the ground for the soon-coming laws of inheritance, and of the marriage described in the next verse.

The words, "and do not substitute worthless for good", mean: Do not substitute your worthless things for their good ones; if there is any good property belonging to them, you should not keep it for yourself returning to them some worthless property of yours in exchange. Some people have explained it as follows: Do not substitute unlawful things for lawful ones. But the former meaning is more obvious, because apparently the two sentences (*do not substitute …, and do not devour*) describe a particular type of unlawful management, and the first sentence (*And give the orphans*) paves the way for both. In the last clause, "this is surely a great crime", *al-ḥūb* (sin; crime) is infinitive verb and also verbal noun.

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ
مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ ۖ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ﴿٣﴾

(4:3) ***And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such (other) women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is nearer that you may not deviate from the right course.***

We have mentioned previously that there was always a great number of orphans among the Arabs of the era of ignorance—who were seldom free from war, fighting, murder and forays, and among whom death by killing was a very common occurrence. Usually, the leaders of tribes and people of power and influence took the orphan girls (with properties) as wives; they devoured their (that is, the orphans') properties with their own and then behaved with them unjustly. Often they turned them out after swallowing their property; the helpless girls became poverty-stricken

destitute; neither they had any money to live on, nor was there anyone willing to marry and maintain them. The Qur'an has reproached them very severely for this evil habit and disgusting injustice, and prohibited very strongly doing any injustice to orphans or devouring their property. For example, God says:

(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter burning fire [4:10].

And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime [4:2].

As a result, the Muslims reportedly became afraid for their own souls and were so panic-stricken that they turned out the orphans from their own homes in apprehension, lest they inadvertently do something wrong with those orphans' property or fail to give them their just dues. If someone kept an orphan with him, he set apart the orphan's share in food and drink; if the orphan could not finish it, nobody else would touch it—it remained as it was until it was spoiled. It caused difficulties for the people; and they complained to the Messenger of God asking for his guidance. Then God revealed: *And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: "To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer; and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it harder for you; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise*" [2:220]. Thus, God allowed them to give shelter to orphans and to keep them with themselves for looking after their affairs, and to mingle with them because they were their brethren. In this way, their difficulties were removed and their worries dispelled.

When you ponder on this fact, and then look at the verse under discussion (*And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such (other) women as seem good to you*)—and remember that it comes after the verse, "And give to the orphans their property "—it will be clear to you that the verse raises the prohibition a degree higher. Its connotation will be as follows—and God knows better: Be careful regarding the orphans and do not substitute your bad or worthless property with their good ones; nor should you devour their property with your own; so much so that if you are afraid that you would not be able to treat the orphan girls equitably and therefore you do not like to take them as your wives, then better do not marry them; instead you should marry other

such women as seem good to you—two, three or four.

The conditional sentence (*And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such [other] women as seem good to you …*), actually means: If you do not like to marry the orphan girls because you fear that you cannot act equitably towards them, then do not marry them, and marry such women as seem good to you. Obviously the clause, "then marry " is substitute of the real *al-jazā*ʾ (second construct of the conditional sentence), [that is, then do not marry the orphans]; the clause, "such women as seem good to you", makes further description [that is, women other than the orphans] unnecessary. The verse does not say, those women who seem good to you; instead it says: such women as seem good to you; it is because it points to the number mentioned later: two and three and four. The verse begins with the clause, "if you fear that you cannot act equitably", while it actually means, if you do not like to marry the orphans because of fear; thus it has allegorically put the cause in place of the effect, pointing to the deleted effect later where it says: "as seem good to you."

Many other things have been written in explanation of this verse, as may be seen in bigger exegeses. They are in short as follows:

(1) The Arabs used to marry four, five or more wives; their thinking was as follows: Why should I not marry as has Mr. X done? When his own property was finished, he spent the property of orphans under his care. Therefore, God forbade them to marry more than four wives, so that they should not be compelled by circumstances to unjustly use the orphans' property.

(2) They were strictly honest in matters affecting the orphans, but did not observe the same standard in affairs of women; so they married numerous wives without maintaining equity and justice. Therefore, God said: If you are afraid about orphans, you should likewise be careful about women; you should marry only one or up to four.

(3) They were reluctant to accept guardianship of orphans or to eat their property. So God said: If you are reluctant of these things, you should also desist from fornication; instead you should marry such women as seem good to you.

(4) If you fear that you cannot act equitably towards the orphans brought up under your care, then marry other lawful women from the orphans among your relatives, two and three and four.

(5) If you are reluctant of eating together with orphans, then likewise

> avoid marrying more than one wife; if you are afraid of not acting equitably with them, do not marry except her whom you can treat with justice and equity.

These were the explanations given by them. But it is clear that none of them properly fits the wordings of the verse. Therefore the only interpretation is the one we have written.

… two and three and four: the paradigms, *mafʿal* and *fuʿal* when applied to numbers, signify repetition of the root word; thus the clause, *mathnā wa thulātha wa rubāʿa* means, two two and three three and four four [or twos, threes and fours]. The verse is addressed to all individuals, and the numbers have been separated by "and" which implies choice; these factors together show that every believer has a right to marry two wives, or three, or four. When looked at together, they would be grouped as twos, threes and fours.

The above explanation, coupled with the next clause, *but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them) then (marry) only one or what your right hands posses, together with the following verse, And all married women …* [4:247], disproves the idea that the verse allows to marry two, three or four wives in one contract of marriage; or that it permits to marry two together, then two together and so on, and likewise three or four together, then other three or four together; or that it approves polyandry—marriage of several men with one woman. These are ideas which the verse does not tolerate at all.

Apart from that, it is a self-evident truth that Islam does not allow a man to gather more than four wives at a time, or a woman to have more than one husband at a time.

Likewise, there is no room for the hypothesis that the word, "and", between the numbers, is for conjunction, and that the verse accordingly allows marrying nine (that is, 2 + 3 + 4) wives at a time. *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says as follows:

> Using the total in this manner is not a possibility at all. If someone says, "The people entered the town in twos, threes and fours", does not mean the total of these numbers—in other words, it does not imply that they entered in groups of nine. Moreover, there is a proper word, "nine", to denote that number; so leaving the correct word and changing it to 'two and three and four', shows an incapability of proper expression—too exalted and sanctified is His speech from such defects.

… but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them) then (marry) only one: That is, marry only one, not more. God has made this order conditional on fear, not on knowledge, because knowledge in such matters is usually difficult to achieve, especially when thought is clouded by temptation; the underlying benefit would be lost if the rule were made dependent on knowledge.

… or what your right hands possess: That is, slave-girls. If a man is afraid that he will not do justice between many wives, then he should marry only one; and if he wants more, then he should take slave-girls, because they are not entitled to division of nights.

Obviously, the provision of the alternative—taking the slave-girls does not mean that one may misbehave with, or do injustice to them; God does not like the unjust, nor is He unjust to His servants. It only means that it is easier to maintain justice with them because they are not included in the rule of division of nights. This very reason shows that this clause refers to taking, and living with them by virtue of possession, not by marriage; the matter of marrying them has been described later in the verse: *And whoever among you has not within his power ample of means to marry free believing women, then (he may marry) of those whom your right hands possess from among your believing maidens …* [4:25].

… this is nearer, that you may not deviate from the right course: *al-ʿAwl*, (to deviate from the right course). The law as ordained above brings you nearer to the point whence you shall not deviate from justice or transgress the women's rights.

Someone has written that *al-ʿawl* means burden; but it is a far-fetched interpretation, both in word and in meaning.

This sentence—which mentions the underlying reason of this legislation—proves that the foundation of the marriage laws is laid on justice and equity as well as on rejection of oppression and usurpation of rights.

وَآتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۚ فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ نَفْسًا
فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَرِيئًا ﴿٤﴾

(4:4) ***And give women their dowries as free gift but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment (and with) wholesome (result).***

al-Ṣaduqah, *al-Ṣadaqah*, *al-Ṣadāq* and *al-Ṣidāq* all mean dowry;

al-Niḥlah means (gift, a thing given freely without bargaining).

The possessive construction, "their dowries", shows that the order to give dowry to a woman is based on the usage prevalent among the people: it was customary in marriage to reserve for the wife some property or anything of value as her dowry. Seemingly it has the same position vis-a-vis the conjugal relationship as the price does vis-a-vis the commodity sold; and as we shall describe in the forthcoming academic discourse, customarily it is the man who proposes and asks for marriage as a buyer brings the price to the seller and receives the purchased item. In any case, the verse endorses this prevalent custom.

It was possible to think that the husband was not allowed to use the dowry at all—even if the wife was pleased with it. Probably it was to remove that possible misunderstanding that the conditional clause was added: "but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment (and with) wholesome (result)." The imperative, "eat it", is qualified with the words, 'with enjoyment and with wholesome result.' It puts emphasis on the previous sentence containing basic rule and also shows that the order is elective, not compulsory.

al-Hanāʾ means (being easily digested, being agreeable); it is used for food. *al-Marīʾ* is derived from *al-riyy* (quenching of thirst); it has some connotation regarding drinks as *al-hanāʾ* does about food, but with one difference: *al-Hanāʾ* may be used for food and drink both; but when the combined phrase, *hanīʾan marīʾan* is used, the former word refers exclusively to food and the latter to drink.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَامًا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٥﴾

(4:5) ***And do not give away your property which Allah has made for you a (means of) support to the weak of understanding, and maintain them out of it, and clothe them and speak to them with kind words***

al-Safah means (feeble-mindedness; weakness or lightness of understanding). Probably, its basic meaning was lightness of a thing which by nature should not be light; thus they say: *al-Zamāmu al-safīh* (a rein or halter that shakes too much); *thawb safīh* (a badly-woven cloth); now it is mostly used for lightness of soul, and its implication varies with context;

in worldly affairs, *al-safih* means feeble-minded, weak of understanding; in religious context, it means a dissolute person, one who does not follow religious commandments; and so on.

It is obvious from the verse that one should not spend too much on feeble-minded persons, should not give them more than is needed for their necessary expenses. But the context—the verse is among the ones dealing with orphans' property which is managed and looked after by guardians—provides a definite association that "the weakness of understanding" refers to the orphans of immature mind; and that "your property" actually means the orphans' property, although it has been ascribed to the guardians because of a certain consideration; this explanation is further supported by the clause, "and maintain them out of it, and clothe them." If one insists on interpreting the word, "the weak of understanding", in general terms, then it should be generalized to include orphans and non-orphans both. Yet the former meaning carries more weight.

In any case, if the word refers to the orphans of feeble understanding, then "your property" means the orphans' property; it has been ascribed to the guardians—whom the verse addresses—keeping in view the fact that all the property and riches found in the world are for the whole mankind. Some individuals keep some portions of these riches, and others some other portions; it is done for general good, on which is based the principle of ownership and exclusive possessive relationship. Accordingly, it is necessary for people to grasp this reality and appreciate that they are all members of a single society, and the whole property belongs to the whole society. Consequently, it is each one's responsibility to protect and preserve it, one should not let it be wasted or squandered by people of weak understanding, nor should it be left under the management of such persons (like minor children or insane people) as are not capable of administering it properly. So this is the significance of the possessive case here; it is not unlike the verse: *And whoever among you has not within his power ample means to marry free believing women, then (he may marry) of those whom your right hands possess from among your believing maidens* [4:25], as it is known that the phrase, "your believing maidens", does not refer to the slave-girls owned by the one who wants to marry them.

The verse contains a general rule ordained for the whole society. The society is a single entity—or let us say a [legal] personality—that owns all the riches which God has given it for its livelihood, and with which He has strengthened it. Accordingly, it is the society's responsibility to manage it

and to keep it in good order; it should invest it in profitable ventures and use the profit for one's sustenance on a medium scale; it is also obliged to protect it from waste and loss. This basic principle gives rise to the rule that the guardians are obliged to look after, and manage, the affairs of the people of weak understanding; they should not hand over their wards' property to them, lest they waste it through mismanagement. The guardians must hold back the property, manage it profitably and let it grow through earning, trades and profit-sharing; they should maintain those feeble-minded wards with its profit and growth—not with its capital. This law has been laid down, so that the capital is not decreased little by little until a time comes when the ward is left in wretched poverty without any means of livelihood.

It appears from the above explanation that the clause, "and maintain them out of it and clothe them", implies that a feeble-minded ward should be maintained from the growth and profit of the capital, not from the capital itself. He should not be allowed to start eating from the capital, keeping it idle without circulation, lest it is eaten up completely. As al-Zamakhsharī has said, it was to show this fine point that God has said, "out of it", and not, 'from it'.

Also it is not unreasonable to infer from the verse, the principle of general guardianship of the wards, that is, God is not pleased that the affairs of such wards be neglected; nay! the Islamic society is obliged to look after their affairs: If there is any guardian in the family, like the father and paternal grandfather, he will be his guardian and will manage his affairs; otherwise the responsibility falls on the Islamic government, and lastly on other believers, to look after his affairs—detailed rules of which are given in the books of jurisprudence.

All Riches Belong to the Whole Mankind

The above is a Qur'anic reality which forms the basis of many important rules and laws in Islam, and which is inferred from the verse under discussion:

All property and riches belong to God in real ownership; He has made it a means of support and a source of livelihood for the human society, without bequeathing it on a particular person to the exclusion of the others (as a permanent irrevocable endowment); without bestowing it on someone as a gift transferring the authority of lawful management to the new owner. Then God allowed individual members to have exclusive

relation with a portion of the riches (which was originally bestowed to the whole humanity), provided that the possessive relationship is established through lawful means, like inheritance, taking possession, and trade, etc. He then laid down some conditions which have to be fulfilled before the individual might be allowed to manage his property, example—sanity, majority and so on.

The firm root which has to be respected at all times and which has developed many branches is this: All property belongs to all men. The individuals' interest should be respected if the common interest of the society is protected, that is, if the private interest is not in conflict with the public will. Otherwise, public welfare will take precedence over private one, definitely and without any hesitation.

Numerous important laws and rules in Islam are solidly based on this foundation; for example, the regulations related to maintenance, and most of the rules governing mutual dealings and other such aspects of life. God has confirmed it in many places in His Book, example—*He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth* [2:29]. We have written some things related to this topic under the verses of maintenance in the second chapter which may be referred to.

Commentary continues:

… and maintain them out of it, and clothe them: We have fully explained the meaning of sustenance or maintenance under the verse; *and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure* [3:27].[1]

The clause, "and maintain them out of it and clothe them", has the same significance here as does the one in 2:233: *and their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father*. The maintenance refers to the food that nourishes man; and clothing is the dress that protects him from heat and cold. But the phrase, "maintenance and clothing", as used in the Qur'anic language (as in our own) metaphorically points to all the things that together fulfil man's material needs in life; it thus covers all necessities of life including house and other such things. It is not unlike the word, eating, which has a particular meaning, yet metaphorically refers to the use (in general), as the Qur'an says: *but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment (and with) wholesome (result).*

… and speak to them with kind words: It is an ethical guidance for

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 5. (Trans.)

improving the standard of guardianship. The wards may be weak of understanding who are prevented from managing their own properties, yet they are neither dumb animals nor grazing cattle; they are human beings, and they should be treated as such; they should be spoken to in good manner, not harshly or insultingly; and dealt with, dignity.

Apparently it is possible to take this clause as a metaphorical expression for good dealing and commendable social intercourse—not objectionable one, as was explained under the verse: … *and speak to men good (words) … [2:83]*.

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا
إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبَرُوا ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا
فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ
أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٦﴾

(4:6) ***And test the orphans until they reach (the age of) marriage, then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property, and do not consume it extravagantly and hastily, lest they attain to full age; and whoever is rich, let him abstain altogether, and whoever is poor, let him eat reasonably; then when you make over to them their property, call witnesses in their presence; and Allah is sufficient as a Reckoner***

al-Ibtilāʾ means (to test); reaching age of marriage, thus it contains a rational allegory; *al-ʾīnās* means (to see, to find); the word has a connotation of "friendliness" and "geniality" because its root is *al-uns* (friendly atmosphere); *al-rushd* (translated here as maturity of intellect) is opposite of *al-ghayy* and means to find way to the goals of life. Handing over to the orphans their property means to give it back to them, into their possession; [the verb used is *al-dafʿ* (to repulse, to push away]; it is as though the guardian pushes the property away from himself; thus it is in spite of its triteness, a very fine metaphor.

The clause, "until they reach (the age of) marriage", is related to the verb, "test"; it thus shows that the testing should be a continuous exercise. The guardian should start testing the orphan as soon as he shows some discretion and appears ready for such tests; it should continue until he reaches marriageable age and becomes a "man." The order by nature

demands this continual process, because one cannot find out whether the child has attained maturity of intellect just by testing him once or twice; the test must be repeated again and again until the guardian finds out the orphan's maturity of mind and it becomes a part of his nature until he reaches puberty and then the marriageable age.

The words, "then if you find in them maturity of intellect", branches from the imperative verb, "And test"; and the meaning is as follows: Test them, and if you find in them maturity of intellect, hand over their property to them. The wording shows that the orphan's reaching the age of marriage is the basis of returning his property to him and of bestowing on him the power to manage his estate independently. Maturity of intellect is the necessary condition for bestowal of authority of independent management.

Islam has laid down two different standards regarding *al-bulūgh* (majority, adulthood) for two different sets of responsibilities: As for the acts of worship and matters like penal code, the majority begins on reaching a prescribed age, but for financial affairs, acknowledgements and other such dealings (details of which are given in the books of jurisprudence) mere attainment of age is not enough, he must also achieve maturity of intellect. This differentiation throws light on the highest refinement and sophistication which Islam has maintained in its legislative programmes. Had it disregarded the maturity of intellect in financial and similar dealings, the social life would have suffered disorder and chaos—as far as orphans and other wards were concerned. Had they been given power [just on reaching a certain age] to independently manage their finance or to make agreements or acknowledgments etc., it would have given a chance to mischief-makers to mislead and deceive them. Cunning hoaxers could have defrauded them of all their means of livelihood, with their smooth talks, false promises and swindling deals. Therefore, it was essential to impose the condition of maturity of intellect in such matters. But obviously there was no need to put this condition in the things like acts of worship, etc.; also it was not necessary in such affairs as penal code. One does not need sharp mind or maturity of intellect to understand and perceive the evil of these crimes and sins or to realize that one should desist from them. Man understands such things long before attaining maturity of intellect, and one finds no difference, in these matters, between the perception gained before maturity of intellect and that achieved afterwards.

… and do not consume it extravagantly and hastily, lest they attain

to full age; and whoever is rich, let him abstain altogether, and whoever is poor, let him eat reasonably; then when you make over to them their property, call witnesses in their presence; and Allah suffices as a Reckoner: *al-Isrāf* (extravagance, immoderateness) is exceeding the medium course of action. *al-Badār* (means, hurry, haste). The clause, "and hastily, lest they attain to full age", means: and hastily fearing that they would grow up and then would not allow you to consume their property. (The phrase, "lest they attain", begins in Arabic with *an* [that] and has no particle of negation; thus it may also be translated, 'that they attain').

Omission of particle of negation before *an* or *in* (that) is consistent with norms of language, as grammarians have said: God says: *Allah makes clear to you, lest you err* [4:176], that is, fearing that you would err.

The two phrases, "extravagantly" and "hastily, lest they attain …", have been put parallel to each other. This arrangement points to their difference.

Consuming the orphans' property extravagantly refers to the situation when the guardian eats it without needing or deserving it, unjustly and carelessly. Consuming it hastily, to the condition where the guardian takes from the estate only the normal and usual fee for his services, but with an eye on the possibility that the orphan might stop it when he grows up. All such consumptions are forbidden, except when the guardian is poor and in such a position that either he earns his livelihood somewhere else or looks after the orphan's affairs and meets his necessities of life from his ward's estate. It would be just like a worker in trade or construction, etc. taking his wages from his employer. It is this aspect which God mentions in the sentence: "and whoever is rich" (that is, is not in need of taking from the orphan's property for his livelihood); "let him abstain altogether" (that is, he should follow and adhere to the path of abstinence and continence, and should not take anything from the orphan), "and whoever is poor, let him eat reasonably."

An exegete has opined that it means that the poor guardian should eat as usual from his own property, not from that of the orphan. But if that was what God had intended to say, then why did He bring in the difference between rich and poor?

The words, "then when you make over to them their property, call witnesses in their presence; and God suffices as a Reckoner", ordain the law to call witnesses at the time of handing over the estate to the wards. It is done to affect the transition in proper way and to remove the danger of dispute and controversy [in future]; lest the orphan—after attaining maturity and

receiving the property—makes claims against the guardian. The verse ends on the words, "and God suffices as a Reckoner"; and it relates the order to its original and basic source—the fountain-head of every rule from God's names and attributes. God is the Reckoner, He would not leave His servants' affairs without meticulously accurate reckoning—and that is His clear legislation. Also the clause completes the Islamic training, because Islam aims at training the people on the basis of monotheism. Although calling the witnesses removes strife and difference in most of the cases, yet sometimes it fails to do so, either because the witnesses deviate from justice or because of other factors. Islam reminds the parties that the spiritual reason [of this law], which is also higher and stronger, is the fear of God Who suffices as a Reckoner. There would never be any discord and difference, if the guardian, the witnesses and the orphan (who is receiving the property) keeps this reality before their eyes.

Look at these two verses [4:5-6] and see how singularly and marvelously they explain the subject in such a lovely style:

First, they give basic rules of guardianship over orphans' and other wards' properties; then they explain other important factors: how the property should be taken in trust and protected, how it should be managed to let it grow and bring in profits, how it should be returned to the ward; when the orphans or other wards should be put under guardianship and when should they be given independent authority to manage their affairs.

All this has been reinforced by describing its underlying common benefit, that is, all property belongs to God Who has made it a means of support for mankind—as we have explained above.

Second, they point to the basic ethical value which man is expected to attain through these laws; it is given by God in these words: "and speak to them with kind words."

Third, they show that all these rules are based on the foundation of monotheism. This factor affects and governs all practical laws and ethical values; and its good influence remains effective always and everywhere even when practical laws and ethical values are enfeebled and their hold on minds and hearts loosened. This reality is described in the last clause, *and Allah suffices as a Reckoner.*

Examining Narrations

(1) Ibn Abī Ḥātim has narrated from Saʿīd b. Jubayr (about the verse, *And give to the orphans their …*) that he said: "A man from (the

tribe of) Ghaṭfān had with him a great wealth of an orphan nephew of his. When the orphan attained majority, he demanded his property, but (the uncle) held it back from him. So he (the orphan) sued him before the Prophet; then the verse was revealed: *And give to the orphans their property …*" (*al-Durru al-manthūr*)

(2) al-Ṣādiq said: "It is not lawful for man's water to flow into more than four wombs of free women." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(3) The same Imām said: "When a man has gathered four (wives) and divorces one of them, then he should not marry the fifth until the waiting period of the woman he has divorced comes to an end." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: There are many traditions on this subject.

(4) It is narrated from Muḥammad b. Sinān that al-Riḍā wrote to him inter alia in reply to his questions: "The reason, why man has right to marry four women and why woman is forbidden to marry more than one, is that when a man marries four women, the child would be affiliated to him; but if a woman had two or more husbands, it would not be known to whom the child belonged, because all of them [that is, the husbands] would be sharing her marriage, and this would lead to perversion in relationship, inheritance and identification." Muḥammad b. Sinān said: "One of the reasons of free women (sic) and permission of four women to one man is that they are more (in number) than men. So when [God] saw it—and God knows more—He said: 'then marry such (other) women as seem good to you, two and three and four.' So this is the determination which God has done, to give amplitude to rich and poor, so that man may marry according to his ability " (*ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ*)

(5) al-Ṣādiq said inter alia in a hadith: "And jealousy is [a characteristic] of men; and for this reason a woman is forbidden (all men) except her husband, and man is allowed four (wives); because God is too gracious to afflict them with jealousy and then allow the man to have three (other wives) with her." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: It may be explained as follows: Jealousy, in the meaning of sense of honor, is a commendable characteristic and noble instinct; it changes equilibrium of man's nature, and it is this emotional agitation that exhorts him to defend what he reveres or holds dear, be it religion, honor or dignity, and provokes him to take revenge on anybody

who violates its sanctity. This trait is found—more or less—in every human being, because it is a part of human nature. Now, Islam is a natural religion. It looks at all the natural instincts and traits and moderates them, restricting them to what is good for human life, and omitting that which is not necessary, example—the defective and imperfect ways of obtaining or hoarding the wealth, or matters connected with food and drink, clothes and spouses, and so on.

Now suppose that God allowed man to marry three more wives in addition to the one he had before—and we know that this religion pays full attention to the dictates of nature. It follows that what is seen of a woman's reaction when her husband brings another wife, and the change that occurs in her attitude towards her husband, is in fact envy, not jealousy. Further explanation will be given in the forthcoming discourse on polygamy, to show that this reaction of theirs is not a part of their nature, it is an extraneous accident.

(6) Zurārah narrates from al-Ṣādiq that he said: "The man shall not take back whatever he gives in gift to his wife, nor shall she do so regarding whatever she gifts to her husband—whether she was compensated for it or not. Does not God, the Blessed, the High, say: *and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them* [2:229]? Again He says: *'but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment (and with) wholesome (result)'*; and it is applicable to dowry and gift (both)." (*al-Kāfī*)

(7) ʿAbdullāh b. al-Qaddāḥ narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh who narrates from his Father that he said: "A man came to the Leader of the faithful and said: 'O Commander of the faithful! I have got stomach pain.' The Commander of the faithful asked him: 'Do you have a wife? He said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Ask her to give you in gift something from her property which she will be pleased to give you; then buy with it some honey; then pour on it some rainwater and drink it. Because I have heard God saying in His Book: *And We send down from the cloud water abounding in good …* [50:9]; and He has said: *There comes forth from within it* [that is, the bee] *a beverage of many colors, in which there i s healing for men* [16:69]; and He says: *but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment (and with) wholesome (result)* [4:4]. You will be cured, God willing.' " (The Imām,) said:

"So he did it and was cured." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: Also al-Suyūṭī has narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from the Imām. It is a fine inference, and is based on extension of meaning. There are many traditions, based on the same principle, narrated from the Imāms of Ahl al-bayt, some of which shall be quoted in appropriate places.

(8) al-Baqīr said: "When I tell you something, ask me (where it is) in the Book of God." Then he said in one of his talks: "Verily the Messenger of God has forbidden idle talk, spoiling of property and asking too many questions." He was asked: "Where is it in the Book of God? O Son of the Messenger of God!" He said: "Verily God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *There is no good in most of their secret talks except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people.* [4:114]; and He has said: *And do not give away your property which God has made for you a (means of) support to the weak of understanding*; and He has said: *do not put questions about things which if declared to you, may trouble you* [5:101]. (*al-Kāfī*)

(9) Yūnus b. Yaʿqūb said that he asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about the words of God, *And do not give away your property … to the weak of understanding*; he said: "Whom you do not trust." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(10) Ibraḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd said that he asked the same Imām about the same verse, and he said: "Anyone who drinks intoxicant is weak of understanding." (*ibid.*)

(11) ʿAlī b. Abī Ḥamzah narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh. He says: "I asked him about the verse, *And do not give away your property.* He replied: 'They are the orphans; do not give them their property until you recognize maturity of intellect in them.' So I said: 'Then how will their property become our property?' He said: 'If you are their heirs.' " (*ibid.*) al-Bāqir said about this verse: "So the weak of understanding are the woman and child. When a man knows that his woman is foolish and spoils (the property), and his child is foolish and spoils (the property), he should not give any of them control of his property which God has made for him a support—that is, a means of livelihood " (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

Author's comments: There are may traditions on this subject, and they

support what we have described earlier that *al-safah* has a wide range of meaning, having different grades, like the weak of understanding who is prevented by law to administer his estate, a child before attaining maturity of intellect, a woman who is fond of amusement and fantasy, one who drinks intoxicants, and generally the one whom you do not trust. The implications of giving the property will change with change of context, and so will do the possessive case of "your property"; you should apply the meanings accordingly.

The Imām's words in the tradition of Ibn Abī Ḥamzah, "If you are their heirs", point to the reality we had mentioned earlier that all the property primarily belongs to the whole society, and then it comes to individuals and particular interests secondarily; it is because the whole society primarily shares the property that it is transferred from one person to another.

(12) al-Ṣādiq said: "Orphanhood of an orphan ends with nocturnal discharge and that is his maturity; and if he got nocturnal discharge, but no maturity of intellect was found in him—he was foolish or weak—then his guardian should hold back his property from him." (*Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh*)

(13) The same book narrates from the same Imām about the verse, *And test the orphans* …, that he said: "To find the maturity of intellect is protection of property."

Author's comments: We have described earlier how the verse points to this meaning.

(14) The same Imām said about the verse, *and whoever is poor, let him eat reasonably*: "He is the man who holds back himself from (earning his) livelihood; there is no harm (for him) in eating [from his ward's property] reasonably, if he makes (things) better for them (that is, the wards); but if the property is small then he should not eat anything from it." (*Tahdhību al-aḥkām*)

(15) Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Naḥḥās (in his *al-Nāsikh*) have narrated from Ibn ʿUmar that he said: "A man asked the Messenger of God and said: 'I do not have any property, and I have an orphan [under my guardianship].' (The Prophet) said: 'Eat from the property of your orphan, (but) not extravagantly nor wastefully; neither consolidating (your) property, nor protecting your property with his property.' " (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: There are numerous traditions of this theme

from the Ahl al-bayt and others. There are relevant laws of jurisprudence, and also traditions related to them. Anyone who is interested, should look in the collections of traditions and books of jurisprudence.

(16) Rifāʿah narrates from the Imām about the verse, … *let him eat reasonably*, that he said: "My father used to say that it was abrogated." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(17) Abū Dāwūd and al-Naḥḥās (both in *al-Nāsikh*) and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated through the chain of ʿAṭāʾ from Ibn ʿAbbās about the verse, *and whoever is poor, let him eat reasonably*, that he said: "It has been abrogated by (the verse), *(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies.*" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: The claim that this verse was abrogated does not agree with the criteria of abrogation. No verse in the Qur'an could stand vis-a-vis this verse in the way an abrogating verse does with the abrogated one. The verse, *(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies*, does not go against the theme of this verse, because the eating allowed in this verse is conditional to being "reasonable", while the eating forbidden in the other verse is conditional to being unjust; and there is no contradiction between permission to eat reasonably and prohibition to eat unjustly. Therefore, the truth is that the verse is not abrogated, and the two above-mentioned traditions are not in agreement with the Qur'an—it is apart from their weakness.

(18) ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mughīrah narrates from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad (peace be on them both) about the words of God, *then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property*, that he said: "If you see them loving the progeny of Muḥammad, then raise them up in grade." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: It is based on the flow of the Qur'an, of the esoteric meaning of the Book. The Imāms of the religion are the fathers of the believers; and the believers, when they are unable to reach the Imāms, are orphans of the knowledge. Therefore, if their affiliation to the Ahl al-bayt is established by their love, they should be raised in status and degree by teaching them true knowledge—which is the inheritance of their fathers.

An Academic Essay (on Marriage)

1. Marriage is one of the Goals of Nature

The basic reality of sexual relation between man and woman is most clearly established by human—nay, even animal—nature; Islam being the religion of nature, confirms it without any doubt. Procreation—the goal nature wants to achieve with this union—is the basic factor and the only reason which has transformed cohabitation into marriage, and raised it from mere carnal relation to a durable union. That is why we see that the species of animals in which both parents jointly bring up their offspring—like the birds in their guarding the eggs and feeding and bringing up the chicks, and those animals who need a den or lair for giving birth to and bringing up their offspring and for preparation and protection of which the female needs cooperation of the male—have opted for a constant attachment and exclusive relationship between the male and the female. In this manner they come together, and share the tasks of guarding and hatching the eggs, and this cooperation continues till the chicks grow up and go their own way; then the parents separate (if they separate at all), then a new cycle begins. It shows that the real cause of marriage and the rationale for matrimony is the instinct of procreation and bringing up the children. As for the satisfaction of sexual urge or joining hands in struggle of life, like earning and saving money, preparation of food and drink, obtaining household effects and, in short, managing the domestic life—these things are not a part of the goal of nature; they are mere preliminaries of, or benefits accruing from, marriage.

It is clear from the above that:

Freedom and licentiousness shown by the couples—husband or wife cohabiting with other than his or her spouse without any restraint whenever and wherever he/she desires, like animal world where a male mounts a female wherever he gets the chance—as is the norm of the day in "civilized" countries; likewise fornication and particularly adultery; Treating the marriage as a permanent union; and prohibition of divorce and separation, not allowing either party to dissolve the marriage and marrying another spouse—as long as the couple is alive; Elimination of procreation and refusal to rear children; laying the foundation of marriage-tie on sharing the domestic life, as is prevalent in "advanced" countries; and consequently sending the newborn children to public nurseries established for

their nursing and bringing up; All this goes against the laws of nature. The nature has equipped human being with instincts and organs which totally oppose these "modern" habits, as we have mentioned above.

Of course, there are animals in whose birth and rearing, the male's continued presence is not needed. Once the female becomes pregnant, she takes on herself all the duties of pregnancy, and of nursing and rearing the offspring. In such cases there is no natural need of durable union between male and female. Such animals are free to cohabit as and when they feel the urge, to the extent that does not disturb the nature's aim of preserving the species.

It would be a folly to think that it won't harm man to disturb the system ordained by creation, to go against the dictates of nature, provided one is compensated for the resulting defects with thought and deliberation; and that in this way he would freely enjoy the life and its blessings.

But such thought is nothing short of insanity. These natural structures—including the human personality—are composites made of innumerable parts. When each part is kept in its proper place, following the laid down conditions, it creates an overall effect agreeable to the goal of nature, which is the aim of creation. This effect leads the species to its perfection. It is not unlike the medical mixtures and compounds, which require particular ingredients with especial qualities and prescribed measure and weights, and are dispensed with laid down procedure; and if changes are made even slightly in its weight or quality it will lose its effects.

Man is a being, naturally created of various parts compounded in a particular way; this special process results in some inner qualities and psychological characteristics, which in their turn produce various actions and activities. If some of these actions are changed from their natural position, it will badly disturb the alignment of those qualities and characteristics, which in its turn will dislocate all the intrinsic characteristics and qualities from their natural position, will deviate the whole being from the path of nature; this would severe man's link with his natural perfection, and turn him from the destination the nature was urging him to reach.

If we look at the general calamities mankind is submerged in nowadays, which render people's endeavours to achieve comfortable and happy life null and void, and which are threatening the humanity with downfall and ruination, we shall find that it has been caused, in the main part, by the total absence of piety, and by the mastery, that stupidity, cruelty, violence and greed, have got over human psyche; and the biggest factor in

this mastery is this licentiousness and permissiveness, this discarding of natural laws concerning marital responsibilities and rearing of children. The system adopted nowadays for domestic life and for bringing up the children, kills the instincts of mercy and kindness and erases the traits of chastity, modesty and humility from man's psyche, from the first moment of his awareness to his last breath.

Can't we compensate for these deficiencies through our reason and contemplation? Forget it. Reason and understanding, like other faculties of life, is a tool acquired by nature as a means to bring the deviating factors back to the natural path. It is not meant to negate the endeavours of creation and dictates of nature; otherwise it would be tantamount to killing the nature by the very sword it had given in man's hand to defend himself. Moreover, if the reason (a tool of nature) is used to support the depravity and decay of other natural faculties, this tool also would be damaged and misaligned like those others.

We are witnessing today that whenever man tries to remove, through his thinking, one of the catastrophes threatening the society, he opens the gate of a greater and more disastrous calamity; and sufferings and travails extend their tentacles some more.

Someone among these people might say: The psychological traits like chastity, generosity, modesty, kindness and truthfulness, which are called spiritual virtues, are relics of the era of superstition and barbarity; they are not good for the modern advanced man. Chastity puts fetters on man's numerous desires. Generosity negates man's endeavours for gathering money, and disregards all the troubles he had undergone in earning it; moreover, it encourages the poor to remain idle and degrade himself by begging here and there. Modesty is a bridle that prevents man from freely expressing his ideas or demanding his rights. Kindness weakens the heart; and truth does not agree with demands of today's life.

Comment: This talk in itself is an example of the deviated thinking which we have mentioned above. This man is oblivious of the fact that these virtues are essential for a human society; if they are removed, the society cannot remain alive as society even for an hour.

What will happen if these characteristics were removed from the society? Everyone will exceed his limits to snatch others' rights, properties and honor; nobody will offer any help to meet the dire needs of society; nobody will feel any shame in breaking the laws of the land; no one will show any mercy to weaker groups—who cannot be held responsible for

their weakness—like children and others; everyone will lie to everyone else, giving him wrong information and false promises. The society will disintegrate at once.

This man should understand that these virtues have not gone, nor will they ever go, away from this world. Human nature adheres to them and it will keep them alive as long as it is calling the mankind to live in society. The most important thing is to arrange and moderate these traits, so that they conform with the goal of nature, which invites man to a happy life. If the attitudes reigning nowadays over the advanced societies were really virtuous or truly well-balanced, they would not have pushed the society to such depravity and disaster; instead they would have led mankind to safety and peace, comfort and happiness.

To come back to our original topic: Islam has put the institution of matrimony in its natural place—as we have mentioned earlier. It has allowed marriage and forbidden fornication and illicit sexual relations. It has established the marriage tie, putting up with possibility of its dissolution, that is, divorce; and made this bond exclusive to a certain extent, as we shall explain below. The foundation of this bond was laid on procreation and bringing up the children; there is a well-known saying of the Prophet: 'Marry, procreate, [and] increase your number."

2. Domination of Males over Females

Observation of animals' sexual behavior shows that the males have a sort of domination and authority over the females in this matter. It is as though the male considers himself to be the master of the female, possessing the right to mount her. That is why we see the males fighting each other for the females, but not vice versa; the female does not stand up to fight another female if the male goes to the latter. Likewise, love-rites, the equivalent of proposals in our society, are initiated in animal kingdom by the males, not the females. It only means that the female is by nature aware that in this respect the male is the active and dominant agent, while she is only a passive receiver. Do not be mislead by occasional ingratiating behavior of the male with the female when he fawns on her by doing whatever would please her; it is but a part of love-play, which he does to heighten the desire and increase the pleasure. But as far as the domination and mastery is concerned, it springs from his virility and its natural function.

The idea that strength and power are inseparable concomitants of the males, and softness and submissiveness, the characteristics of the females,

is found more or less in all nations, and has filtered into various linguistic idioms and expressions. They call a tough unbendable thing as "male", and a tender pliable item as "female"; example—[in Arabic] they say: Male iron, male sword, male grass, male place, and so on.

This idea is generally common to the whole human species, prevalent in different societies and various nations—although there might be some difference in degrees.

Islam has kept this reality in view in its legislation. God says: *Men are the maintainers of women, because of that with which Allah has made some of them to excel the other …* [4:34]. Islam has made it obligatory for a wife to submit to her husband if he wants to cohabit with her—whenever possible.

3. Polygamy

As far as we have observed, the question of "monogamy or polygamy" in the animal world is not definitely settled. In cases where the male and the female have to live together (because the male remains busy whole time in helping his mate in "domestic" affairs, raising the children and looking after them) "monogamy" is the rule, that is, the female remains exclusively attached to the male. Yet sometimes the system may be changed through skill, planning and guarantee of security, that is, by domestication and training, as is seen between the cock and hens and even pigeons, etc.

Coming to our own species, polygamy was a custom prevalent in most of the ancient nations like Egypt, India, China and Persia; and even Rome and Greece, who supplemented the wife with concubines who lived with her in the same house. Some nations, like the Jews and the Arabs, observed no limit; some married ten, twenty or even more wives; reportedly the king Solomon had married hundred of women.

Mostly, polygamy was prevalent in tribal and other similar communities, like villagers and highlanders. A head of family in such societies always felt a pressing need for a large coterie of followers. Polygamy was his way of achieving this goal; increased births gave him a large number of sons, who in some years became a force for defending his interests—a necessary part of life in those communities—and raising him to the leadership of the community. Also, the increased number of marriages increased the circle of relatives through affinity.

Some scholars have said that the main factor leading tribesmen or villagers to polygamy was their preoccupation with a lot of back-breaking

jobs, like carrying and transporting loads; shepherding and cattle grazing; farming and irrigation; hunting, cooking and weaving; and things like that.

This theory is correct to a certain extent; but contemplation of their psychological traits proves that these factors had a secondary importance in their eyes. What we have mentioned earlier was the primary and basic concern of a nomad. Also it was this factor which led them to gather adopted sons around themselves.

There was one more basic reason which increased the number of wives in those societies, and that was the presence of women in much greater number than men. In those tribal societies battle and war was a never ending phenomenon, as was assassination and murder. Such killings continued to decrease the male population, and women's number increased to a level where the only way to fulfil their natural needs was through polygamy. Think over it.

Islam has ordained marriage with one wife, and allowed marrying up to four, provided the man is able to treat them equitably; it has at the same time taken steps to remove the difficulties and shortcomings found in polygamy, as we shall mention later. God says: *and they (women) have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner* [2:228].

Objections against Polygamy

First Objection: It creates evil effects in society. It hurts the feelings of women, frustrates their hopes and stops the fountain-head of love in their hearts. The love is transformed into a desire for revenge. They neglect the household, do not look after children's welfare, and pay their men in their own coin. Thus they indulge in adultery, embezzle their property, and tarnish their honor. The society immediately sinks to the lowest level possible.

Second Objection: Polygamy goes against the system which the nature has obviously established. Census figures, obtained from various communities generation after generation, show that the male and female populations are almost equal. It means that nature provides only one woman for one man. To disturb this balance goes against the nature's programme.

Third Objection: Allowing polygamy encourages men to lust and avidity, and gives boost to such tendencies in society.

Fourth Objection: Polygamy degrades women in society, as it counts four women as equal to one man; and it is an unjust assessment, even from Islamic point of view which treats two women as equal to one man, example—in inheritance and evidence, etc. On that basis too, marriage

with only two women should have been allowed—not with four. Marriage with four is deviation from justice, however we look at it.

These objections have been written by Christians or by those sociologists who advocate equal rights for both sexes in society.

Reply to the First Objection: We have repeatedly explained that Islam has laid the foundation of human society on rational, not emotional life. In sociological field, it follows what is good for the society in reason, not what is desired by emotions or feelings.

It does not mean that Islam kills the emotions and feelings, or negates the divine gift of natural instincts. It is accepted in Psychology that difference in education and training creates difference quantitatively and qualitatively in psychological traits and inner feelings and emotions. For example, many rites and customs that are highly appreciated by the Orientals are looked down upon by the Occidentals, and vice versa. Every community differs from the others in one way or the other.

Religious education and training in Islam raises the woman to a level where her feelings are not injured with such things. Of course, the Western woman has become accustomed for many centuries to being the only wife, and has been taught this idea generation after generation. This has created in her, a psychological aversion against polygamy. Proof of this may be found in the shocking licentiousness and promiscuity of men and women prevalent in the "advanced" nations nowadays.

Do not their men satisfy their lust with anyone they like and who responds favorably to their advances—no matter whether she is within prohibited degree or outside, is virgin or deflowered, is married or unmarried? It has reached a stage where one cannot find among them a single man or woman in a thousand who has not indulged in illicit sexual relations. Not only that; now they have plunged into sodomy to the extent that no one seems clean of it. The debauchery has become a norm of the day, so much so that just last year it was proposed in the British parliament to legalize the sodomy—after it had spread among them "illegally." As for the women, and especially virgins and spinsters, their affairs are even more amazing and more shocking.

Would that I knew why the women in those countries are not sorry for this state of affairs? Why are they not embarrassed by it? Why are their hearts not broken by it? Why are their feelings not injured when they see all this debauchery from their men? Also, why is the man not annoyed when he marries a girl and finds her deflowered and comes to know that

she had already been bedded not only by one or two men? Why does he start boasting in the morning that her bride had been so popular with men that tens, rather hundreds, had vied with each other to win her favors? Why this insensitivity? Is there any reason except that this wantonness and immorality has been going on for so long, and this licentiousness and lasciviousness has so captured their minds, that now it has become a second nature to them; now it neither hurts their feelings nor looks strange or objectionable to them. It is as we had mentioned earlier that the prevalent customs mould the feelings and emotions in their own mould, and do not let them take any other shape.

As for the claim that polygamy makes the women neglect their house, ignore the children's education and incline towards illicit sexual relations and embezzlement, experience shows hollowness of such talks. This law was ordained and enforced in the early days of Islam, and no scholar of history can claim that it had caused any disturbance in the social order. The reality was poles apart from such claims.

Moreover, the women who marry a man as his second, third or fourth wife—in Islamic or other polygamous societies—enter into marriage contract willingly, with their open eyes. They belong to the same society, they are not captured from other countries, nor have they been brought here for this purpose from outer space. Yet they willingly agree to such marriage for one or the other sociological reason. It follows that woman by nature is not against polygamous marriage; nor are her feelings injured by it. If there is any resentment it should be shown by the first wife; when a woman has remained alone with her husband, she would not like intrusion of another woman in her house, lest her husband show more attachment to the new wife, or the new wife acquire more authority, or differences raise their heads between the two wives' children, or things like that. It shows that unhappiness and resentment, if there be any, springs not from natural disposition, but from an incidental situation, that is, remaining for sometime alone with the husband.

Reply to the Second Objection: The argument by the equality that nature supposedly maintains between numbers of males and females is untenable for many reasons:

(1) Marriage does not depend on equal rates of birth alone; there are many other factors and conditions that control it. First of all, maturity of mind and capability of marriage appears sooner in girls than in boys. Girls, and especially in hot climates, are ready for marriage as soon as they reach

the age of nine; while boys do not attain puberty before the age of sixteen (and this is what Islam has kept in view for deciding the age of marriage).

Its evidence may be found in the behavior prevalent among the girls in the "civilized" countries: Rarely does a girl remain virgin up to the age of the "legal adulthood"; and the only reason is that nature makes her ready for marriage long before bestowing that ability on boys.

Now, let us look at a group of boys and girls born during the last sixteen years—and supposedly both sexes are equal in number. How many marriageable boys will be there in the group? Only those who are sixteen years old, that is, those born in the first year of the period under study. But how many girls of marriageable age will be there in the group? All those who were born from the first to the seventh year of this period [that is, the marriageable girls will be seven times more than the marriageable boys]. Increase the period under study to twenty-five years (the age when men usually reach their full maturity and strength). How many men and women of marriageable age do you get in this group? The men who were born during the first ten years, and the women who were born during the first fifteen years. It gives us an average of two women for each man, by natural law.

(2) Census reportedly shows that expectancy of life is greater in woman than in man. In other words, men die earlier, leaving some women who would remain alone, with no man to marry them if monogamy is to be the rule.[1]

(3) The ability to procreate continues longer in men than in women. Usually women reach menopause at the age of fifty, while men's virility continues for years and years after that. Sometimes his ability to procreate continue to the end of his natural age, that is, a hundred years. Accordingly a man's reproductive period, about 80 years, would be double of that of a woman (which is about 40 years). This premise in conjunction with the

1 It is supported by a report published recently in a newspaper (*Iṭṭilāʾāt*, Tehran, 11th Day, 1335 A.H. Solar [= 1st January, 1957]), quoting the Census report of France as follows: The census shows that in France 105 boys are born for every 100 girls. Yet the women have a plurality of 1,765,000 over men in a population of about 40 million. The reason for this disparity lies in the fact that the boys have less resistance to diseases than the girls, and consequently by the age of nineteen boys' number decreases by 5 per cent. Then their number continues to decrease up to the age of 25–30, and by the time they reach 60–65 years of age, only 750,000 males remain alive vis-a-vis 1,500,000 females. (Auth.)

preceding one proves that the creative nature allows the man to marry more than one wife. How can nature bestows the ability to reproduce and then prohibit the use of receptacles suitable for that reproduction? Such contrariness is not the way natural causality works.

(4) The carnages like battles and wars liquidate mainly the male population, compared to which women remain almost unaffected. As mentioned above, it was a strong factor in the spread of polygamy in the tribal societies. If those widows and spinsters are not cared for through polygamous marriages, then what are the alternative available to them? Either fornication or negation and nullification of their natural faculties!

This problem had raised its head in West Germany a few months before writing these lines. There the spinster women spoke about the hardships and difficulties they were facing because they could not find any man free to marry them; they demanded from the government to allow them to contract polygamous marriage—in Islamic manner. The idea was to permit the men to marry more than one wife in order that those spinsters should not be deprived of their natural rights. But the government rejected the demand, and the Church refused to agree—although tacitly they agreed to the spreading of adultery and fornication and to the ruining of would-be generation.

Even if we close our eyes from all the above factors, the argument of equality of the numbers of both sexes would stand only if we suppose that every man in the society (practices polygamy) and marries up to four wives. But nature has not prepared every man for it; only a few, and not all, can marry more than one wife. Islam has not made it compulsory for every man to enter into many marriages; it has only made it lawful—for him who is able to treat all wives equitably. This permission does not create any difficulty or disturbance; and its clearest proof may be found in the Muslim and other polygamous societies where it has not created any shortage of women and no man fails to find a wife for him. In contrast with that, we find in the monogamous societies thousands of women who are left in the lurch as they cannot find anyone to marry them and provide them a chance to settle in life; their only outlet is fornication.

Apart from that, this objection could only be advanced if Islam had not had provided this rule with checks and balances for keeping it safe from those imaginary defects. Islam has made it compulsory for a man who wants to marry more than one wife to behave with them with justice and equity, to live with them in fairness, and divide the nights between

them; it has obliged him to maintain them and their children equitably. Obviously, not every man can easily spend on, let us say, four wives and their offspring, keeping within the circle of justice and fairness in his dealings with them; it may be done only by some of the well-to-do people.

Moreover, there are some lawful Islamic ways which may be used by a woman to encourage and oblige her man not to marry another wife after her.

Reply to the Third Objection: This objection springs from not looking attentively at the Islamic way of education and training or at the goals of this Shariah. The education given to women in an Islamic society—as approved by religion—trains them to keep themselves covered, makes chastity and modesty their second nature, and protects them from breach of decency. Consequently, a Muslim woman grows up with far less sexual desire than is found in a man. This is in spite of common belief that sexual desire in a woman is stronger and greater.

Why has this idea spread? Just because by nature a woman seems more concerned with her adornment and beauty. But the fact is otherwise; and no Muslim man (who has married women grown up in Islamic atmosphere) can have an iota of doubt about it. In reality, an average man's sexual desire far exceeds that of a single woman—even of two or three of them.

Let us look at it from another angle. Islam is very concerned that none should be deprived of necessary natural desires or essential biological demands. From religious point of view, it is not good for a man to supress his sexual desire and remain frustrated, as it would lead him to indecency and immorality. But a woman remains justifiably incapable of sexual relations for about a third of her married life, example—during monthly periods, advanced stages of pregnancy, delivery, breast-feeding and for similar other reasons. But it is necessary to provide for prompt satisfaction of the husband's desire. It is the necessary conclusion of the repeatedly mentioned principle that Islam has laid the society's foundation on rational, not emotional, basis. It is therefore a great danger from Islam's point of view to leave the man unmarried or in his above-mentioned sexual frustration, as it would lead him to lustful thoughts and immoral activities.

Apart from that, the Law-giver of Islam considers it very important that the Muslims should have lots of offspring, in order that the Earth should flourish with goodly prosperity at the hands of a Muslim society, erasing polytheism and mischief from the World.

It is these and similar other considerations which have led Islam to legalize the institution of polygamy; it was not for spreading lustful ways or encouraging lecherous behavior. Had our detractors followed the dictates of justice, their own social customs—popular among them who have built their society on the foundation of material enjoyment—more deserving to be accused of spreading immorality and encouraging licentiousness, than the Islam which has based its social order on the foundation of religious bliss and felicity.

Furthermore, just the fact, that man has the permission to marry other wives, pacifies and calms down the avidity, which a sense of deprivation could have agitated. Every deprived one is greedy; when one is forbidden a thing, his mind remains continually busy in devising plans to get that thing. Every Muslim—even if he has only one wife—is satisfied and contended that he is not prevented from satisfying his sexual desires if a need arose in future to do so. This in a way calms down his such desires, and protects him from inclining towards indecency and tarnishing other's honors.

A Western scholar has rightly said that the strongest factor that has contributed in spreading adultery and immorality in the Christian nations is the Church's prohibition of polygamy.[1]

Reply to the Fourth Objection: This allegation is totally unacceptable. We have described in a previous discourse, when writing on the rights of women in Islam[2], that no social system whatsoever—be it religious or secular, ancient or modern—has ever honored the women as much, and cared for their rights so comprehensively and perfectly, as Islam has done; and we shall further explain it somewhere else. As for allowing a man to marry more than one woman, it is not intended to be a negation of women's social prestige, nullification of their rights or degradation of their status in life; it is founded on several underlying benefits, some of

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1 Vide John Davenport, *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran*, Which has been translated into Persian by the scholar, Saʿīdī. (Auth.)
Mr. Saʿīdī has translated the title of the said work of Davenport as: '*Offering Apology to Muḥammad and the Qur'an*'. He seems unaware of the difference between 'apology for' and 'apology to', and of the fact that the word 'apology' as used in this title, means, explanation or defence of belief', etc. The title, therefore, means '*In Defence of Muḥammad and the Qur'an*'. (Trans.)

2 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 4. (Trans.)

which have been mentioned above.

A lot of the Western scholars—both men and women—have admitted the goodness and perfectness of this Islamic law, and the social disorder and dangers inherent in prohibition of polygamy. Interested readers should look for their comments in their books.

The strongest argument used by the Western detractors of polygamy, which they offer before their audience with much embellishment, is the condition found in those Muslim families where there are two or more wives.

They say: Such houses are devoid of happy life and good living. No sooner do the two rival wives enter the house than they start envying each other. (People call envy, the disease of rival wives.) Thereafter all the kind of feelings and noble characteristics which are ingrained in woman's nature love and tender-heartedness, kindness and gentleness, compassion and affection, good advice and looking after husband's honor in his absence, faithfulness and devotion, mercy and sincerity for husband and his children from other women, and care for the house and household—are changed to their opposites. The home—the place intended for man's comfort, where he expects to rest and relax after his daily toils and troubles, when he is dead tired in body and mind after the drudgery of earning his livelihood—is transformed into a battlefield where life and honor, wealth and prestige are freely attacked and violated; nothing is safe from any side; horizon of life becomes cloudy and pleasant existence becomes a thing of the past. In place of bliss and happiness, appear hitting and slapping, abuse, invective and curse, backbiting and tale-bearing, spying, intrigue and trickery. Children quarrel and dispute with one another. Things sometimes reach a stage where the wife plans to kill the husband, and some children kill the others or even their father. Kinship is metamorphosed into a never ending feud that for generations causes bloodshed, genocide and downfall of the house. Add to it the effects it brings to the society: unhappiness, moral corruption, cruelty, injustice, transgression, indecency and lack of security and trust. [There is also another dimension to this problem,] when you add legality of divorce to the permission of polygamy. These two factors, combined together, create in the society connoisseurs, who live luxurious lives and whose interest is centred on satisfaction of their lust and avidity; their passion revolves around getting this woman and discarding that one, raising one's status and lowering the other's. It is nothing less than thwarting and frustrating

a half of the mankind, that is, the females, and submerging them into sorrow and grief. Their degradation results in depravity of the other half [and the whole society is demoralized].

Comment: This was the gist of what they have said, and the objection is true—but its targets are the Muslims, not the Islam or its teachings. When have the Muslims truly followed the Islamic teachings, that Islam could be held responsible for the consequences of their misdeeds? Centuries have passed that there is no good government which could train them with noble teachings of the shariah. On the contrary, the first people to rip apart the curtain put up by the religion, to break the laws of the shariah and to violate its limits were the very Muslim rulers and people in power—and people follow the customs of their rulers. It is not possible to narrate here even a small portion of the life style in the "Muslims" Kings' palaces, or the scandals indulged into by the sultans and governors, since the days the religious government turned into monarchy and sultanate; otherwise we will have to write a complete book on this subject. In short, the objection, if valid, can be laid against the Muslims: that they adopted a way of life which could not bring any happiness in their homes, and followed a policy which they could not prevent from deviating from the straight path. The whole blame lies on the men, not on their women or children—although every soul is responsible for what it has earned of sin. Why? Because it was these men's behavior—they thought nothing of sacrificing their own happiness, and that of their families and children together with the clean environment of the society, on the altar of their greed, lust and ignorance that was the root cause of all these disasters and fountain-head of all these destructive troubles.

As for the Islam, it has not legislated polygamy as a compulsory and obligatory duty of every man. It looked at the people's nature and at the difficulties some of them faced now and again, and so it concluded that polygamy contained definite goodness [for solving those problems], as was described above in detail. Then it looked minutely at the negative effects of polygamy and its dangers. Consequently, it allowed polygamy for the underlying benefit of humanity, but at the same time imposed such a restriction on it as to remove the chances of all those disgraceful depravities—that the man should be confident that he would live with them in equity and treat them justly and fairly. Islam allows plurality of wives only to him who is sure of himself in this respect. As for those who do not care for their own or their families' and children's happiness and

felicity, whose only mark of honor is satisfaction of their stomachs and genitals, and in whose eyes woman is only a means to satisfy man's lust and to give pleasure to him, Islam is not concerned with them, nor does it allow them to marry more than one—if we say that they are allowed to marry even the one, with that mentality of theirs!

Moreover, there is a mix-up in this objection between two completely separate aspects of religion, that is, the legislation and the governmental authority. It may be explained as follows:

According to modern scholars the criterion to judge about a laid down law or prevalent tradition whether it is a good law and tradition or bad, is to look at the acceptable or unacceptable effects and results obtained from enforcement of that law in the societies, and whether or not the societies in the prevalent condition accept the law faithfully. I do not think they are oblivious of the fact that society sometimes is fettered by some customs, traditions or accidents that do not agree with the law under study; in such a condition, the society should be reformed in a manner as not to hamper or negate the said law or tradition, in order that it may be seen how the law works, and what effect it brings in its wake whether it is good or bad, beneficial or harmful. The only difference is that their criterion for a laid down law is the currently prevailing desire and demand of the society—whatever that demand may be. Thus what agrees with their current wishes and demands is considered a good law, and what goes against it, is bad.

That is why when those Westerners saw the Muslims wandering in the valley of error, steeped in immorality in this life and wickedness in the next, they attributed to the Islamic shariah (which the Muslims supposedly followed) all the evils found among the Muslims, example—falsehood and embezzlement, indecency and usurpation of rights, prevalent transgression and ruined homes, and in short the whole spectrum of corrupted social order. They thought that the Islamic tradition and system is like other social systems in its implementation and effects. The other systems conform with their members' desires and demands. So, those scholars thought that Islam too has the same quality, and that all these social disorders have been generated by Islam; that it is this religion that gives rise to depravity and corruption (and among them are found the most depraved and the most immoral persons; as they say, there are all kinds of game in the belly of the wild ass). Had it been a real religion, and its laid down laws really good and containing people's welfare and felicity, it would have produced good and beautiful effects in the society, instead

of becoming a curse for it.

But these people have confused the nature of a good and beneficial law with the nature of a corrupt and harmful people. Islam is a composite unit of spiritual knowledge, moral teachings and practical laws—all of which are interrelated. If one part is damaged or tampered with, the whole is damaged, and its effects are changed. It is not unlike the medical compounds and mixtures which require, for their health-restoring effects, their proper ingredients and a proper place to prepare them. If some ingredients are spoiled or adulterated, or if the directions for its use are not properly followed, it will not bring the desired effect; rather it may produce opposite result [and harm the patient].

At this juncture let us admit, for the sake of argument, that the Islamic system could not reform the people, and could not erase common social vices and depravities—because its legislative base was unsound. But why is it that the democratic system has not succeeded in our eastern countries as it has in Europe? Why is it that the more we try to go ahead on this path the farther back we fall? No one has any doubt that the vices and depravities have taken deeper roots in our society today (when we have become civilized and enlightened) than it was fifty years ago (when we were uncivilized barbarians!). Today our society is devoid of social justice; we trample on human rights; we do not give higher education to our masses; and we lack all the social benefits and blessings—for us these are merely names without substance, words without meaning.

Ask them the reason, and they will say: This good system has not worked among you because you have not really put it into practice, have not tried to implement it properly. Well, why this excuse is acceptable in case of democracy, but not in case of Islam?

Let us suppose that Islam, because of the weakness of its foundation (God forbid!), could not capture the people's hearts and could not take deep roots in the society; and consequently its rule could not continue, it lost its vitality in the Muslims' social order and was discarded at the first opportunity. But why did the democratic system—the universally appreciated system—go away, after the World War I, from Russia? Why were its traces lost there? Why was it replaced by the communist system? Again, why did it give way, after the World War II, to the communist system in China, Lithuania, Estonia, Albania, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, etc.? Why does it pose a danger to other countries, after having established considerable influence in them?

Now let us look at the communist system. It flourished for about forty years; and spread to, and ruled over, nearly half of the mankind. Its rulers and champions are never tired of boasting of its excellence and superiority. According to them it is the only clean stream that is unpolluted by dictatorial tendencies and democracy's exploitation; the countries where it has taken roots have turned into Utopia. If this claim is correct, then why did the same rulers and champions, some two years back, stand up to condemn the rule of its matchless leader, Stalin, who had led and governed Russia for thirty years? Why did they announce that his rule was despotic and dictatorial, and that it was nothing but enslavement in the guise of communism? Everyone agrees that Stalin had great influence in legislation of the laid down laws and their enforcement and all that follows. In other words, all this was produced by the will of an enslaving dictator; it was a one man's rule, which revived thousands and killed thousands; made some people happy and kept others oppressed, deprived and unhappy. Only God knows who will come after these [present rulers] to condemn them as they had done with their predecessors.[1]

Look into history books and you will find mention of a lot of systems, civilizations and cultures that governed the societies for sometime; some were good, others bad; then they passed away because of various factors—the strongest being the treachery of the leaders and feeble will of the masses.

Would that I knew what is the difference between Islam (as a social system) and those other transformed and changed systems, that the excuse [of leaders' treachery and followers' weak-willedness] is accepted in their case and rejected in the case of Islam? Yes, today the word of truth has fallen between a formidable western might and an imitative eastern ignorance; neither any sky shelters over it nor any earth raises it up. However, it should be clear from what we have mentioned above that whether a system is effective or not, and whether its hold on the people remains strong or it loosened, depends not so much on its correctness or incorrectness—so that this aspect could be used to prove its truth or falsity. It is rather affected by so many other causes and reasons. There was not a single system in the long human history but it produced results for sometimes

1 Khrushchev, who had denounced Stalin in February, 1956, was himself forced by Leonid Brezhnev and Alexey Kosygen to resign in disgrace in October, 1964. (Trans.)

and then became barren; it ruled over the society for a stretch of time and then passed away—all this for some factors acting for or against it; *and We bring these days to men by turns, and that Allah may know those who believe and takes witnesses from among you* [3:140].

In short, the Islamic shariah and its laws differ in their fundamental philosophy from all other social orders prevalent in various human societies. These [man-made] social systems go on changing with change of times and policies, but not so the Islamic laws. The Islamic laws—consisting of obligatory, prohibited, like, disliked and permissible—never change. Of course, those actions which a person has the choice to do or not to do, and every disposition which he has right to enact or leave, the Islamic ruler has got authority to order the people to do it or forbid them from doing it; he can dispose such matters as if the society were a single body and the ruler its thinking mind and soul.

Had there been an Islamic ruler there, he could have prevented the people from the inequities and injustices they commit in the name of polygamy or for other pretexts, without affecting any change in the divinely given permission. It would have been a general executive order based on an underlying benefit, just as a man might decide for his personal reasons not to marry more than one wife—not because the rule had changed but because it was only a permission which he had full right not to avail himself of.

Another Related Academic Discourse on Many Marriages of the Prophet

Another target of their objection is the many marriages of the Prophet. They say: Plurality of marriage in itself points to avidity and to yielding to lust and desire; and the Prophet was not content with four wives which he had allowed to his *ummah*, but exceeded even that limit and married nine women.

This question is related to many different verses of the Qur'an, and detailed discussion of its every aspect should be given under those verses. Therefore, we are leaving the details for the relevant places, restricting ourselves to a short description here in a general way.

It is necessary to point out that the plurality of the Prophet's marriages is not such a simple matter as to be dismissed in a sentence that 'he was inordinately fond of women, so much so that he married nine wives.' The fact is that he had married each one of his wives for some particular reason

in particular circumstances during his long life. His first marriage was with Khadījah (may God be pleased with her), and he lived with her alone for more than twenty years[1], and it constitutes two-thirds of his married life—and covered [almost] the whole Meccan period of the prophethood. Then he emigrated to Medina and began spreading the Call and raising the words of religion. Thereafter he married several women—virgin and widows, young, old and middle-aged. This continued for about ten years, then the women were prohibited to him other than those who were already in his marriage. Obviously, these happenings with this peculiarities cannot be explained just by love of women or desire and passion for them, because his early life and the later period both contradict this assumption.

Just look at a man with a passion for women who is infatuated with carnal desire, and enamoured of female companionship, with a sensual lust for them. You will find him attracted to their adornment, spending his time in pursuit of beauty, infatuated with coquetry and flirtation, and craving for youth, tender age and fresh complexion.

But these peculiarities were diametrically opposite of the Prophet's character. He married widows after virgin, old-aged women after young girls. He married Umm Salamah (an aged woman) and Zaynab bint Jaḥsh (who was more than fifty years of age) after marrying ʿĀʾishah and Umm Ḥabībah, and so on.

Then he offered his wives a choice that he should give them a provision and allow them to depart gracefully (that is, divorce them) if they desire this world and its adornment, or they should renounce the world and abstain from adornments and embellishments if they desired God and His Messenger and the latter abode. It may be seen in the following words of God: O Prophet! say to your wives: *"If you desire this world's life and its embellishment, then come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing. And if you desire God and His Messenger and the latter abode, then surely God has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward"* [33:28–29]. As you see this is not the attitude of a man who is enamoured of women's love and infatuated with carnal desire.

If a scholar, after deeply studying this matter, follows the dictates of justice, he will have to look for some reasons, other than avidity and lust, for his plurality of wives, beginning with his early life to the latter days.

In fact he had married some of them to add to his strength by

1 Twenty-five years, to be exact. (Trans.)

increasing relationships and helping hands; some of them were taken into marriage to win the enemies' hearts and as a protection from some of their evils. He married some others to maintain and protect them, in order that it might become a regular practice among the believers for the protection of widows and aged women against poverty and degradation. Some marriages were performed to practically affirm and enforce a lawful order, for abolition of evil traditions and false innovations which were prevalent in the society. This was the case of his marriage with Zaynab bint Jaḥsh; she was first married to Zayd b. Ḥārithah, then Zayd divorced her; this Zayd was called "son of the Messenger of God" by the [pre-Islamic] custom of adoption; the pagans considered wife of an adopted son like the wife of an actual son and the "father-in-law" could not marry her. Therefore the Prophet married her [to confirm abrogation of adoption and the related customs], and several verses were revealed on this subject.

The first woman to be married to the Prophet after the death of Khadījah, was Sawdah bint Zamʿah, whose husband had expired after returning from the second migration of Abyssinia. Sawdah was a believing lady who had migrated [for her faith]. If she were left to return to her own family who at that time were unbelievers, they would have tortured and tormented her as they were doing with other believing men and women using suppression and killings and forcing them to renounce their faith.

He married Zaynab bint Khuzaymah after her husband, ʿAbdullāh b. Jaḥsh, was martyred in Uḥud. She was one of the most generous ladies even in the era of ignorance, and was called "Mother of the poor", in recognition of her generosity and kindness towards needy people. The Prophet, with this marriage, preserved her prestige and dignity.

He also married Umm Salamah, whose actual name was Hind. Before that, she was married to ʿAbdullāh Abū Salamah, who was a cousin of the Prophet (son of his paternal aunt) and his foster brother; Abū Salamah [and his wife] were among the first to emigrate to Abyssinia.

She had renounced the worldly pleasure and was highly distinguished in piety and wisdom. When her husband died she was very advanced in age and had many orphan children. That is why the Prophet married her.

Ṣafiyyah was daughter of Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, the chief of Banū al-Naḍīr. Her husband was killed in the battle of Khaybar, and her father with Banū Qurayẓah, and she was among the captives of Khaybar. The Prophet chose her for himself and married her after emancipating her. With this marriage he protected her from humiliation and established affinity with the Children of Israel.

The marriage with Juwayriyyah, that is, Barrah, daughter of al-Ḥārith, the chief of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq, was performed after the battle of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq. The Muslims had arrested two hundred of their families together with women and children. The Prophet married Juwayriyyah; so the Muslims said: "These are the relatives of the Messenger of God by marriage; they should not be held captives." So they freed all of them. Impressed by this nobility, the whole tribe of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq entered into the fold of Islam. It was a very large tribe, and this [generosity of the Muslims as well as the Islam of that tribe] created a good impression throughout Arabia.

One of his wives was Maymūnah, whose name was Barrah bint al-Ḥārith al-Hilāliyyah. She was the one who gifted herself to the Prophet after the death of her second husband, Abū Ruhm b. ʿAbdi al-ʿUzzā (al-ʿĀmirī). The Prophet then married her, and a verse was revealed regarding her marriage.

Also he married Umm Ḥabībah, that is, Ramlah daughter of Abū Sufyān. She was married to ʿUbaydullāh b. Jaḥsh and had emigrated with him to Abyssinia in the second Migration. While there, ʿUbaydullāh was converted to Christianity, but she remained steadfastly on Islam; while her father, Abū Sufyān, in those days, was gathering army after army to annihilate the Muslims. Therefore, the Prophet married her and afforded protection to her.

Ḥafṣah bint ʿUmar was married to him after her husband, Khunays b. Ḥudhāfah, was killed in Badr, and she was left a widow.

And he married ʿĀʾishah bint Abī Bakr, and she was a virgin.

When one looks at these details, and ponders on what we have mentioned above regarding the Prophet's life from his early days to the end, and on his self-denial and rejection of worldly embellishments, and his exhortation to his wives to do the same, one can have no doubt that the marriages which he had contracted with these women were not like those done by other people. And to it the benevolence with which he treated the womanhood, revived their rights which the centuries of ignorance and barbarism had put to sleep, and restored their prestige and honor in the society. [He was so much concerned with women's welfare that] reportedly the last words he uttered were addressed to the men about their women. He had said: "(Be careful about) prayer, (be careful about) prayer; and (about) what your right hands possess, do not impose on them what they have no strength for; (fear) God, (fear) God about the women, because they are helpless in your hands …"

His behavior was matchless in dealing equitably with his wives, living with them gracefully and paying regard to their feelings and wishes (as we shall describe some aspects of it when writing on his characteristics in the coming discourses, God willing.) As for the permission to marry more than four, it was, like fasting continuously for two days without any break at night, an order exclusively reserved for the Prophet—the *ummah* was prohibited it. It was these especial characteristics—and the fact that all people were clearly aware of them and they did not have any room for objection to his enemies, although they were always on the look out for some openings to attack him.

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Verses 7-10

Now begins the legislation of inheritance laws, after paving the way for it. These verses give a precis of the said laws in its basic form, to let the people know that nobody can be deprived of inheritance after the proof of his birth or relation, as they used to debar minor heirs and women. Further it warns them against depriving the orphans from inheritance, as it would result in swallowing by others, heirs of the orphans' share unjustly, and God has very severely prohibited it. The verses also recommend giving something from the estate to relatives, orphans and poor who, although not included among the heirs, might be present at the time of dividing the property.

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ۚ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا ﴿٧﴾

(4:7) ***Men shall have a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and women shall have a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether there is little or much of it; a decreed share.***

al-Naṣīb (share, portion) is derived from *al-Naṣb* (to make something stand, to lift up, to raise); this name points to the fact that at the time of division, every share is put separately to prevent its mixing with the others'. *al-Tarikah* means (the heritage, the property left by the deceased); it is as though he goes away leaving it; thus initially it was an allegorical usage, then became common. *al-Aqrabūn* (the nearer ones) refers to nearer relatives; choice of this word [of comparative degree] in preference to *al-aqribā*ʾ (the near ones) and *ulu al-qurba* (relatives), etc., gives an indication that it is the essential pre-requisite of inheritance that the deceased should be nearer to the heir, as will be explained under the verse, *your parents and your children, you know not which of them is nearer to you in usefulness* [4:11]. *al-Farḍ* originally meant to cut a hard thing and to detach its parts from one another; that is why it is used for obligatory rules, because to follow and obey it is "determined" without any doubt; "a decreed share" means a determined and fixed portion or ratio.

The verse ordains a comprehensive law and legislates a new system which was unfamiliar to the people. The people had never known any system similar to this inheritance law, as ordained in Islam. Traditionally they used to deprive many heirs of inheritance, and it had become a second nature to them; so much so that if anything was said against it, the minds were agitated and feelings hurt.

Islam paved the way for this new system, first by strengthening the "love in God" and giving preference to religion among the believers. Thus it established "brotherhood" between the believers and then made one "brother" inherit the other. This wiped out the previous succession rules, and the believers abandoned the old pride and prejudice. When the religion became strong and could stand on its feet, this final system of inheritance between the relatives was introduced—at a time when they were enough believers to accept this law with open arms.

The above discussion shows that this verse aims at clear description, and removal of all possible misunderstandings, by giving a fundamental and comprehensive basis of the law. Thus it says: "Men shall have a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave." The rule is general and unrestricted, it is not qualified by any condition, attribute or other such things. Likewise the subject, that is, "men", is general and not qualified in any way; therefore the minors shall inherit like the adults.

Then it says: "and women shall have a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave." Like the preceding sentence it is a general statement, without any shade of restriction; thus it covers all women without any qualification or condition. The clause, "of what the parents and the near relatives leave", has been repeated, although it could be replaced by a pronoun; the reason is to make the topic as clear as possible. It is followed by the clause, "whether there is little or much of it"; it makes the matter even more clear, and shows that there is no room for any indulgence or negligence in this matter thinking that the deceased's estate was very small or the value negligible. The verse ends on words, "a decreed share"; it is a circumstantial clause, related to the preceding word, "a share", as it contains a connotation of *masdar*; it gives a double emphasis and makes the declaration even more clear that the shares are definitely fixed, and there is no room for any confusion or ambiguity.

It has been proven with this verse that the general law of inheritance covers the estate of the Prophet as well as of other Muslims, and that the

doctrine of *al-taʿṣīb* (giving preference of agnates[1]) is invalid.

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينُ فَارْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٨﴾

(4:8) ***When there are present at the division the relatives and the orphans and the needy, give them (something) out of it and speak to them kind words.***

Apparently the verse refers to these people's presence at the time when the heirs are dividing the estate among themselves, and not to their presence near the dying person when he is bequeathing his estate—as someone has written.

Accordingly, "the relatives", would refer to the poor among them; it is also proved from the fact that they have been mentioned with the orphans and the needy. The tone of the clauses, "give them (something) out of it and speak to them kind words," obviously exhorts the hearers to mercy and kindness, and therefore it is addressed to the heirs and executors of the will.

There is a difference of opinion whether the order given in this verse (to give those people something from the estate) is obligatory or only a desirable act. It is a matter of jurisprudence beyond the scope of this book. Also there is disagreement whether the verse is decisive or has been abrogated by the verse of inheritance. But the relation between the two verses is not that of contradiction, because the verse of inheritance fixes the shares of the heirs, and this verse speaks about the non-heirs—either as obligation or recommendation—without fixing any share; therefore there is no ground for saying that it was abrogated, and especially if the described "giving" is only a recommendation—as the verse somewhat apparently shows.

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَافًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٩﴾

(4:9) ***And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly***

1 An agnate is a person descended from the same male ancestor as another specified or implied person, especially through the male line. (Pub.)

offspring, would fear on their account; so let them fear Allah, and let them speak right words.

Fear is a psychological effect caused by nearness of a somewhat great danger or evil; *al-sadād* and *al-sadad* of a talk means its being right, correct, straight, relevant.

Probably the verse has a sort of connection with the previous one, "Men shall have …", because that verse with its generality contains the laws of the orphans' inheritance; now this one in a way is a warning and a threat to him who wants to follow the old system of depriving small heirs of inheritance. In that case, the clause, "and let them speak right words", will be an adverse and unfavorable allusion to their habit as they did not give any share to, and swallowed the rights of the minor orphans. The allegorical use of "word" for "deed" is very common because of their mutual association. God has said: … *and speak to men good (words)* … [2:83]. This idea is also supported by the use of the adjective, "right" for "words" instead of "kind" or "gentle"; apparently a word may be called right when it can be believed and acted upon—not when it can only preserve people's dignity and honor.

In any case, the clause, "And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account", is obviously a simile to animate and stimulate mercy and compassion for small weakly children who have lost their guardian and protector (who could have looked after their welfare and saved them from humiliation and disgrace). The implied threat and warning is not directed to only him who may at the material time be actually having some weakly offspring; it uses the conjunction law (if) [which as a rule introduces hypothetical conditional clauses], and does not say, 'should they leave behind their weakly offspring'. It is rather a simile to present a clear image of the situation. The connotation therefore would be as follows: Let those fear who have in their hearts mercy for humanity and compassion and sympathy for those weakly small children who have lost their fathers and are orphaned—only such people are real Muslims who are imbued with divine characteristics and graced with God's manners. In other words: Let those people fear and be afraid of God in matters of the orphans, because they are like their own orphans, small and weak; the people must fear for them and care for their welfare; these helpless children should not be oppressed nor their rights usurped. The style is the same as we say: "Let him who fears

dishonor and humiliation, try his level best to earn his livelihood"—and who does not fear it?

People have not been ordered here to show mercy and compassion, etc.; they have been told to fear and be afraid of God. It is a threat that whatever they do to other people's orphans by usurping their rights and swallowing their property unjustly, would befall their own orphans after them; whatever misfortunes and miseries they cause to others' orphans would return to their own orphans after their passing away.

As for the clause, "so let them fear God and let them speak right words", we have already explained that apparently the "words" connotes practical behavior; also possibly it may mean views, ideas and advice.

The Deed Returns to its Doer

Whoever deals unjustly with an orphan in his property, his injustice will surely return to his own orphans, to the orphans from his offspring. It is one of the marvellous Qur'anic realities. It branches from a divinely revealed reality that there is a connection between the good and bad deeds and the natural phenomena. We have thrown some light on it while discussing the Rules Governing Actions in the second volume of this book.[1]

People, on the whole, believe that man reaps what he sows, that he harvests the fruits of his deeds; a benevolent good-doer gets bliss and felicity in his life, while an oppressive evil person has to taste the evil consequences of his misdeeds. There are many verses in the Qur'an which prove this fact with their unrestricted style. God says:

Whoever does good, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it [41:46].

So, he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it [99:7–8].

He said: "I am Joseph and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us; surely he who guards (against evil) and is patient (is rewarded) for surely Allah does not waste the reward of those who do good" [12:90].

… for him is disgrace in this world … [22:9].

And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought [42:30].

There are many such verses which show that good and evil deeds react on, and return to, their doer in this world too.

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1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 3. (Trans.)

Our thoughts are conditioned by our experiences in the society; and when we hear such statements, the first thought that comes to our minds is that the doer himself reaps the fruits of his actions. But there are verses that show that the affair is much wider and more encompassing; that man's deeds—good or bad—sometimes return to his progeny. God says: *And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure, a mercy from your Lord* [18:82].[1] It is obvious from the verse that their father's righteousness had some hand in what God intended for them as a mercy from Him. On the other hand, God says in the verse under discussion: "And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account."

Therefore, the matter of the effects of deeds is wider and more general; and the blessing of misfortune that befalls a man results sometimes from his own actions and sometimes from what his progenitors had done.

Meditation on the divine words leads us to the basic cause of this phenomenon. We have described in the second volume[2] on the topic of Invocation, under the verse: *And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am very near* [2:186], that according to the divine words, whatever comes to man from God is because of an invocation which he addresses to his Lord; whatever preliminaries and causes a servant prepares, are in reality a sort of supplication and invocation addressed by him to his Lord; and it brings to him the effects and results from the Lord. God says: *All those who are in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him; every day He is in a (new) state (of glory)* [55:29]; *And He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah's bounties, you will not be able to number them* [14:34]. It should be noted that God has not said, 'and if you count it, you will not be able to number it.' [In other words, He has not used pronouns which would refer to all that they had asked for and was consequently given to them by God; instead, He has used the clear expression, "God's bounties"] because not all that they had [practically] asked for was a bounty (and the verse aims at showing His favors to them and

1 This verse also proves that the progeny of the Prophet (the ahl al-Bayt) deserve and have the right to be honored and dignified by the believers since he (the Prophet) was the most righteous in the sight of God. (Pub.)

2 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. 3. (Trans.)

admonishing them for their ungratefulness]; that is why He mentioned only a part of what they had asked for, and that is the bounties.

Whatever man opts for himself, or whatever he does to another person—whether good or bad—shows that he is pleased that it should befall the other person who is a human being like himself. In this way he practically asks for that thing for himself and shows his pleasure that it should befall him—because he too is a human being like his victim. It clearly means that when a man does good to someone else, he in reality asks God to do exactly the same good to himself—an invocation that is bound to be answered and cannot be rejected. Also when he does an evil or injustice to someone, he in effect asks for it for himself and shows his pleasure with it. Thus whatever he is pleased to do with others' children and orphans, in effect he is pleased that it be done to his own children, and practically asks it to be done to his own orphans—be it good or bad.

God says: *And every one has a direction to which he would return; therefore hasten to (do) good works* [2:148]; that is, hasten towards good works so that your direction should be good.

All human beings have a common blood in their veins and have come out from the same womb. It makes the descent, that is, progeny, a single unit. Whatever condition affects any side of this unit, and whatever misfortune befalls it, in reality affects and befalls the main body and reaches through it to all sides [including the doer's]. We have thrown some light on womb (relationship) at the beginning of this chapter.

Now it is clear without any doubt that whatever a man does to another person or to that person's progeny, is bound to come back to him or his progeny, except that God should decide otherwise. We have inserted this exception because there are many causes and factors affecting one's existence which we are not even aware of, and possibly some of them might exert an opposite influence on one's affairs. Some hint of it may be found in the divine words, *And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hand have wrought, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults)* [42:30].

Commentary continues:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ۖ وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

(4:10) *(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans*

unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter burning fire.

The sentences, 'He swallowed it', and, 'He swallowed it into his belly', both have the same meaning, but the latter is clearer and more emphatic. This verse too, like the preceding one, is related in theme with the opening sentence, "Men shall have a share …" It threatens people and deters them from swallowing the orphans' shares of inheritance.

The verse is one of those which prove the embodiment of deeds, as was explained in the first volume[1], under the verse: Surely *Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable …* [2:26]. Perhaps it is this idea which an exegete had in mind when he wrote that the words, *surely they only swallow fire into their bellies*, have been used in their literal, not metaphorical, sense.

Another exegete has unjustifiably taken exception to this statement. He has said: The verb, "they only swallow", is used here as a present, not future, tense, because the future is described by the subsequent clause, "and soon they shall enter burning fire." (Note the word, "soon.") Now if swallowing the fire is taken in its literal meaning and it is to happen on the Day of Resurrection—then this sentence too should have contained the word, "soon." Therefore, the clause is, in fact, used in allegorical sense and means that in swallowing the orphans' property they resemble someone who swallows fire into his belly.

This is the gist of his objection; but it shows that the objector was oblivious of the import of embodiment of deeds.

The end clause, and soon they shall enter burning fire, points to the chastisement in the hereafter. *al-Saʿīr* (burning fire) is one of the names of the fire of the hereafter; [*yaṣlawna*, (translated here as "they shall enter",) is derived from] *ṣaliya al-nār*, *yaṣlā*, *ṣalyan* (that is, he broiled and burned into fire; he underwent ordeal of fire).

Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says about the verse, *Men shall have a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave*: "People have two views about this verse; one is that it is decisive and not abrogated; and this has been narrated from al-Bāqir."

Author's comments: It is narrated from *al-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī that

1 Vide *al-Mīzān* [Eng. trans.], vol. (Trans.)

this verse was abrogated by the verse, *God enjoins you concerning your children*. But there is no justification for this view. We have explained in the above commentary that this verse gives a precis of the coming inheritance laws; and there is no contradiction at all between this and the other decisive verses of inheritance, so that it could be said to have been abrogated.

(2) Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have narrated from ʿIkrimah about this verse: "It was revealed about Umm Kulthūm and daughter of Umm Kuḥlah or Umm Kuḥḥah herself and Thaʿlabah b. Aws and Suwayd (all of them from the Anṣār). One was her husband and the other the paternal uncle of her child. She said: 'O Messenger of God! My husband died leaving me and his daughter, but we were not given anything from his inheritance.' The uncle of her child said: 'O Messenger of God! (How can she get his inheritance when) she neither rides a horse nor attacks an enemy, and while she needs others to earn for her and she does not earn? Then the verse was revealed: *Men shall have a share …* (*al-Durru al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: Some other traditions say that it was revealed about a man from the Anṣār who died leaving two daughters. Then his two cousins came and they were his agnates [to take his inheritance]. His wife told them: "Marry these two (girls)"—and they were not beautiful. So they refused. Then she brought the matter before the Messenger of God; then the verses of inheritance were revealed … As we have repeatedly said, there could be more than one reason for revelation of a verse.

(3) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says about the verse, *And when there are present …* "People have two different opinions about this verse; one is that it is decisive, not abrogated, and it is narrated from al-Bāqir."

(4) al-Shaybānī says that the above is narrated from both al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq (peace be on them). (*Nahju al-bayān*)

Author's comments: Some traditions say that it is abrogated by the verses of inheritance; but we have mentioned earlier that it is not repealable.

(5) Abū ʿAbdillāh and Abu al-Ḥasan (peace be on them) have said: "God has threatened two punishments concerning the orphan's property: One is the punishment of the hereafter, (and that is) the fire; and as for the other, it is the punishment of this world, (and it is) His words: *And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account; so let them fear*

Allah and let them speak right words." (Then) he said: "He means that he should fear that God would requite him in his offspring as he had done with these orphans." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: A similar tradition is narrated in *al-Kāfī* from al-Ṣādiq, and in *Maʿāni al-akhbār* from al-Bāqir.

(6) ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, *mawlā* (freed-slave) of Āl Sām, says: "Abū ʿAbdillāh said (without anybody asking him): 'Whoever does injustice, God shall give someone power over him, who will oppress him; or over his children or over his grandchildren.' So I thought and said in my heart: 'Injustice is committed by him and someone is imposed on his children and grandchildren?!' The Imām then said to me before I could speak: 'Surely God says: *And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account; so let them fear Allah, and let them speak right words.*' " (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(7) ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd has narrated from Qatādah that he said: "We have been told that the Prophet of God said: 'Fear God regarding to weaklings: the orphan and the woman; (God) made him orphan, then urged (people) to take care of him; and put him to test, and put (others) to test through him.' " (*al-Durru al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: There are a lot of almost *mutawātir* traditions narrated through the chains of both sects, in condemnation of swallowing the orphan's property, showing that it is a major and mortal sin.

The end. All praise be to Almighty God.

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